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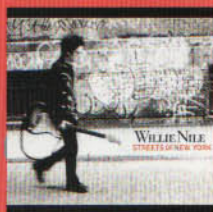
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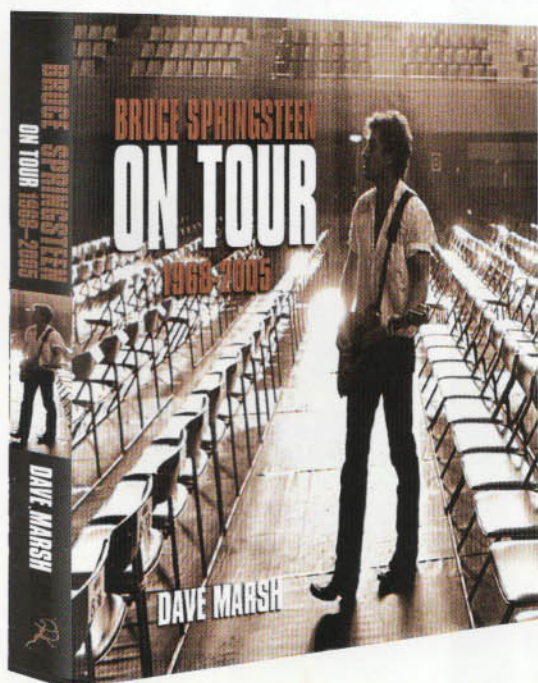
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Backstreets

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4/5/07, New York, NY
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BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
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LETTERS

WAITIN' FOR A TRAIN

Dear Editor:

I threw on my copy of James Brown's *30 Greatest Hits* when he passed. I hadn't heard it in a while, and I had nearly forgotten how great the guy was. However, I almost fell over when "Night Train" came on.

Now, we know that Bruce has been influenced by many, many soul greats and displayed it on record and in concert: Eddie Floyd's "Raise Your Hand" from the famous Agora '78 radio bootleg, the Impressions' "People Get Ready" integrated into the stirring "Land of Hope and Dreams," Sam Cooke ("Mary's Place"), Solomon Burke (the gospel rant during "Freeze-out" on the reunion tour), actually using Sam Moore (of Sam and Dave) on *Human Touch*, and so many more.

The old "I Hear a Train" routine that Bruce has used frequently over the years, often as

part of "Light of Day" if I am not mistaken... well, when I heard the Godfather of Soul starting to call out the towns in "Night Train"—"Miami, Florida, Atlanta, GA!"—it caught me by surprise and brought back a lot of Bruce concert memories for me.

For those of us that were lucky enough to see him on the *Darkness* tour, we remember that most shows for a good period closed with Gary U.S. Bonds' "Quarter to Three," and more than once Bruce borrowed from the Hardest Working Man in Show Business the old cape routine, where after muttering some phrase indicating exhaustion to the point of near injury ("Somebody Stop Me Before I Hurt Myself!"), a colleague would help him creakily off the stage; only then, suddenly throwing off the cape would Bruce return for yet another verse and chorus of that song.

It says a lot about both artists that even an homage can be so memorable. We will miss the great James Brown.

Gary Rubin
Santa Monica, CA

MOVIN' ON

Dear Editor:

I'm prompted to write to you since reading your comment about Bruce returning to "what he does best—rock the house" in your online review of the 12/12/06 concert.

For me, the 2006 tour was totally amazing. I only saw three shows (wish I'd gone to more), and only one from the best vantage point—standing near the front. But on that one night (11/11 at Wembley) I witnessed one of those magical nights when everything gels, when everything is right—an excited and exuberant crowd, nearly ideal song selection, and a magnificent performance by Springsteen and the band.

When a concert is this good, I suppose you wonder whether it's just your impression; the faces of those around me on that night and the glowing press reviews in the U.K. (the best for many, many years) suggest I'm not alone in my enthusiasm. I hope our Bruce fan friends in the U.S. were lucky enough to experience this tour at its very best—the sec-

ond European leg of the tour was truly inspiring.

My reaction in 2006 went from surprise, when I first heard about the album, to wariness when buying it, to acceptance on the first leg of the tour, and finally to elation at Wembley Arena. How can I not be looking forward to whatever Bruce does next?

Andrew Hewitt
via e-mail

SING ME BACK HOME

Dear Editor:

I got a kick out of your "New World Revealed" piece in the last *Backstreets*; as a father of two (and one more coming) I, too, once searched for Bruce's music to help verbalize what I was experiencing after the birth of my first. Fortunately for me, *Lucky Town* and my daughter's arrival were within months of each other, with her just beating the album, so "Living Proof" was the shot to the head for me.

I still remember driving out to get bottle liners or diapers at 2 a.m. in my pajamas and cranking "Living Proof" the whole way. In fact, that song still brings me

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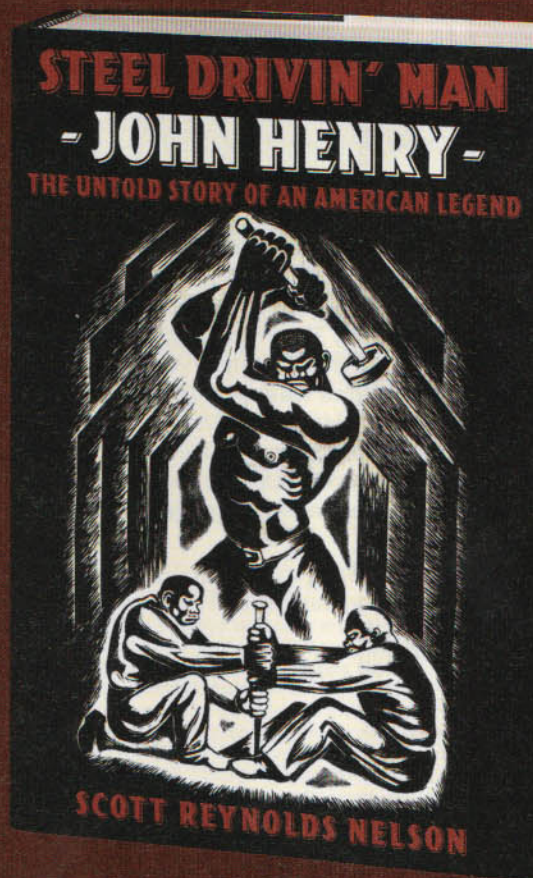
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back to moments of her baby years.

My son is six, and since "Living Proof" was "used" by my daughter, it never really connected for him. Maybe I was the "weathered" parent by then, who knows... but one day I was raking my yard and I popped in a random CD I had burned (new technology back then) and just hit play. About four songs in, my son comes rambling out of the house—just starting to walk—and as he makes his way off the steps and toward me I recognize the song that has started: "Papa go to bed now, it's getting late, nothing we can say is gonna change anything now..."

Why "Independence Day," especially at that age? Who knows, but for the rest of that song I just stood there and watched him move around the yard, from push toy to basketball to plastic golf club, and kept thinking: this little kid is someday going to leave. As a young parent (as you are finding out) there are few thoughts more terrifying. I'm not sure if I was scared to death, or schizo from sleep deprivation.

So, I have "Living Proof" (the obvious), "Independence Day" (less obvious and sorta weird), and as I mentioned, I now have a third almost here. It's gonna be a boy... I hope "Adam Raised a Cain" doesn't come on my iPod shuffle!

The other day my daughter and I were driving together in the car and "When You Need Me" came on my iPod shuffle. Together we decided that would be the wedding song she and I dance to. It's funny how songs can mean different things with kids. I bet you nobody thought of that song as a father/daughter song, but it works—give it a listen and try not to get too emotional.

Thanks for your great piece, and the awesome magazine—still the *only* one I read from cover to cover.

Kyle Reagan
Amherst, NH

BIG CITY

Dear Editor:

Kudos to Anthony D'Amato for his great Willie Nile article [Backstreets #85] and equally great photos. Buffalo's loss has

been NYC's (and the world's) gain! Seriously, we don't mind sharing—Willie's too talented, and to deprive the rest of the world of that talent would be a sin. Thanks for helping deliver the message!

Gary Zoldo
Buffalo, NY

FIGHTIN' SIDE OF ME

Dear Editor:

The high point for me on the *American Land* edition of Bruce's Seeger Sessions release was the "American Land" track. I had heard the song lead off one of his concerts at the PNC Bank Arts Center—a winner it was! I wanted to hear it full-blast on my speaker system and read along with the words, the song being a stunning testimony to this country's aspiration that the world's humanity, no matter in which of its groups we may find ourselves, might find a place and a home in this land. Nevermind for a minute the racism and cruelty that keeps the dream deferred, this has been a promise that Bruce's music has kept alive.

Now that I have the released version in hand, I am astonished—even angered—to find one key line missing from the lyrics page for the "American Land" song. It is a line that is a special challenge to hear from Bruce's lips, given the rapid lyrical phrasing the song rhythm demands. But it's also a line full of references to some of those in the U.S.A. today who are most challenged to find a home: "The Puerto Ricans, illegals, the Asians, Arabs miles from home." Bruce sings it on the new album, and it is included on at least one internet transcription of the song, but you won't find it printed the *American Land* edition liner notes.

What happened? Maybe in the released recording Bruce garbled the line so much that they thought it best to just leave out the transcription? Maybe it was just a freak accident that this one line got left out? I doubt it. Perhaps someone thought it too hot to handle, this making room for "Puerto Ricans, illegals, the Asians, Arabs miles from home." I don't want to believe that they tried to soft-pedal that line's witness or stay clear of

Continued on page 66

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What goes around comes around

Good Vibrations

By Christopher Phillips

Well, hallelujah, I've got a musical kid. Lucy Rose is 15 months old now, and she's a songbird—she wakes up singing, she sings when she eats, she sings in the car, she sings when she's bored. (Those last two might be related.) Of course, she doesn't know many words yet, but that's what they made "la" for. We'll trade la-la-la's back and forth, and what would sound tedious and annoying to anyone else has me convinced that she's some kind of rhythmic prodigy.

And what a simple yet powerful tool to have in the old bag of tricks—music hath some serious charms to soothe our savage baby. When nothing else will calm her down, just singing the *Flintstones* theme in her ear works wonders. Oh, and "Old Dan Tucker" is a hit, too. Apparently you don't have to know what a frying pan is to think it's a silly thing to wash your face in.

As a lifelong music geek, this has all been a real kick, though not much of a surprise. If it's true that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, it was easy to imagine that this dominant trait her mother and I share would get passed along. As kids seem to do, though, Lucy still found a way to confound expectations: she loves to hear us sing, but she hasn't given two poops about the stereo.

Her mother and I play music. Sitters play music. One babysitter told us that Lucy went nuts for Waylon Jennings—"Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," specifically—but I was never able to replicate it. Repeat listens to Prince's "Paisley Park" convinced me that the first time, when she squealed with delight, must have been a fluke. Even the *Seeger Sessions* album—a no-brainer, you'd think—did nada. Lucy just hasn't seemed to feel any magic coming out of those speakers. She just wants to hear us sing.

I should consider myself lucky. For one thing, it's flattering: someone likes my voice. Plus: no

grubby hands reaching for buttons, no tantrums over hearing one more song before bed. As long as I'm singing to her as we head back to put her in pajamas, she doesn't blink when the stereo clicks off. But long car drives—when singing is the only thing that will keep her happy, and a CD just won't cut it—become grueling exercises as we grow hoarse and try to come up with a new farm animal for the yet another verse of "Old MacDonald."

Now, this is easy to rationalize. A music snob already, she prefers live performance. I can appreciate that. She can tell live from Memorex. Still, to fully blossom into the musical child she was clearly born to be, she has to develop a tolerance for pre-recorded music, however impure it may be. Should I get one of those SACD players? Invest in some new speakers? Consult Neil Young's latest audiophilia tract? I was stumped. Until...

I put on a record.

And our world turned upside-down. All of a sudden, I can't tear her away from the stereo. We dance, dance, dance, as she points excitedly at the record player. My child is *old school*! She can tell analog from digital! And man, what taste—the record that did it was a Hold Steady seven-inch, their cover of the Violent Femmes' "American Music" on the flipside of "Stuck Between Stations." I can't quite express the joy of seeing my daughter's open-mouthed, toothy grin as the background singers repeat "I hear music... sweet, sweet music": she loves vinyl! Better yet, she loves an import-only, non-LP B-side!

I should mention, incidentally, as we danced around the room and she stared wide-eyed at the spinning platter no matter where I turned, she pointed at

the record player and said, very clearly: "Car." Cars have been an obsession lately—it's a word she's got down pat, and anything with wheels (or things that spin... or, like, round things...) is a "car."

I mention this only to acknowledge that maybe she just likes watching things turn, turn, turn. I'm no fool. But at the same time, she's no fool, either: maybe she's already to begun to identify

themes. Does she want to hear some Springsteen? Is she asking for "Pink Cadillac"? Another non-LP B-side!

In the corner of our living room sits my grandfather's hand-cranked Victrola, handed down to me when he died

last summer. I wind it up and let it spin, put the needle down on an old, crackly 78. It's some nondescript foxtrot from my grandfather's collection, but Lucy goes nuts, clapping her little hands as the record goes around and around. I search on eBay and find an "Old Dan Tucker" 78, a Little Golden Record featuring Win Stracke with Mitch Miller and His Orchestra. Soon enough, we're dancing around the living room to the strains of that old chestnut, Lucy in my arms, pointing excitedly and exclaiming, "Car, car!"

Actually, sweetheart, that's another song—let's go get my copy of 'Til We Outnumber 'Em and I'll play it for you.

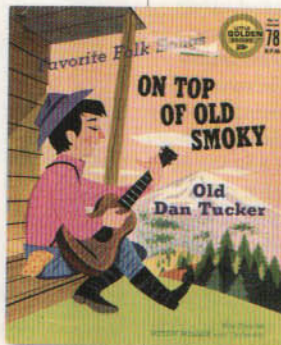
* * *

So, that's what I've been doing since the last issue... all the while trying to find a balance between this newfound joy and doing my job. This job, thankfully, is a joy in and of itself, but it's been a struggle to tear myself away from my daughter to do it. This issue you hold in your hands is tangible evidence that, finally, a balance is being struck. It feels good to be back in the groove,

to be able to integrate work and fatherhood, and I appreciate the patience of everyone who wondered what the hell happened to the magazine in recent months.

In order to put this issue of *Backstreets* to bed, as the sheer volume of goings-on piled up since we last published, I had to make one difficult decision: what to do with the Seeger Sessions tour coverage? We're such big fans of Springsteen's last outing here at the Backstreets Towers, we hated the idea of trying to shoehorn tour reports in here, to give that unique tour short shrift. So after considering compressing our coverage, or splitting it up, the solution struck: let's save it, do it right, and catch up on everything else in the meantime. So the next issue of *Backstreets*, to follow shortly on the heels of this one (as I'm bound and determined to stay in this groove), will be a complete Sessions tour spectacular, following the whole thing from first leg to last. Since, over the last decade or so, Backstreets.com has become our main way of reporting news in a timely fashion and we've shifted the focus of the magazine toward more archival and in-depth features, having a self-contained Sessions tour special issue on the shelf felt like the way to go. So stay tuned for the Summer 2007 issue, coming soon, when we'll bring you show-by-show reports from start to finish, a bevy of bandmember interviews, and exclusive photos from every leg.

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NEXT STOP, E STREET?: With the release of the Dublin run serving as a final send-off to the Seeger Sessions era (or rather, what we like to think of as its first full era), attention turns to what's next for the Boss. The answer, it seems, lives on E Street. Little Steven, doing numerous interviews around the *Sopranos* series finale, has frequently been coy, but he laid it out pretty straight to Spinner.com in April: "We gotta make a record, which could happen soon... I just get a vibe it's going to be sooner than later. Once that's done, we're very fast. [Springsteen] literally could call me today, we could have a new album out and be on the road within three months." *Fast* is the current watchword, with well-placed sources indicating that Springsteen is already well into recording his next album, a rock record featuring the E Street Band, with an eye on an October 2007 release. Since the beginning of the year there have been numerous Bruce sightings in Atlanta (home of producer Brendan O'Brien's usual stomping ground, Southern Tracks studio); we're told that they really got down to business in late spring, with recording having progressed considerably by the end of May. Insiders expect Springsteen to wrap up studio work later in the summer, and for rehearsals to begin shortly thereafter for a tour. From Montreal to Sweden, newspapers have reported feelers out to local venues. Take any such specifics with a big piece of rock salt—dates and cities remain speculative at best—but all signs indeed point to a fall start for an E Street Band world tour. As we go to press, rumblings are of a European leg beginning in early October to kick things off. . . . Speaking of kick-offs: lots of rumors, after Prince's knockout halftime show at the 2007 Super Bowl, that the Purple One's big 1984 competition (and we don't mean Madonna) was being lined up for 2008. The article that started the talk—and really, the only solid indication we've had thus far—was a February 23 article in *Variety* that named Springsteen and Norah Jones as topping "a short list of entertainers [the National Football League] would

like to see perform at next year's Super Bowl." No further word, and we're not laying out any bets; but if they want to go big with this next tour, as we expect, it's hard to imagine a higher-profile gig.

TELL THE TRUTH: Fire up that Netflix queue—lots of movies to note, with an emphasis on documentaries and artist profiles. Springsteen recently appeared in the PBS "American Masters" doc *Woody Guthrie: Ain't Got No Home*, speaking about Guthrie's legacy: "These songs will remain rallying points for generation after generation after generation. Some people are going to thrash them out. But people are going to return to them and find something in them." . . . In a bit of symmetry, Bruce also turns up in another new folkie profile, *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song* by director Jim Brown, which showed at the Tribeca Film Festival this spring. . . . *Into the Fire*, with Springsteen donating the title track, debuted on the History Channel, presented by the Fireman's Fund. The Bill Couturié-directed doc focuses on the stories of firefighters and the risks they take to save others' lives. . . . Flat Broke Productions is in post-production on *A Good Life: The Joe Grushecky Story*, due later this summer, with Bruce appearing as well. . . . Clarence Clemons is working on a documentary of his own: "Right now I'm in the middle of editing a movie I've been working on for two years," he told the *Port Folio Weekly* in April. "It's a documentary about my life in China. I married a Chinese woman and bought a house there. It's about my spiritual life, traveling on the road in China." Meanwhile in his old hometown, Clarence was honored with a star on the Norfolk, VA Legends of Music Walk of Fame. . . . Springsteen's music has appeared in numerous non-doc films lately, too, including *In the Land of Women* ("The Iceman"), *Gracie* ("Growin' Up"), and *Lucky You* ("Lucky Town," "The Fever"). *Reign Over Me* makes prominent use of *The River*, with "Out in the Street" and most notably "Drive All Night" serving crucial roles in the film. . . . It's not a sure thing, but with Little Steven serving



Spirit of 76: entertaining the troops at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

as musical coordinator for the upcoming *Glad All Over*, featuring Robert Duvall, Bruce is reportedly lined up to cover the Dave Clark Five's title song. . . . On the small screen, the series finale of *October Road* featured the voices of Steven, Bruce, and Southside Johnny, with nice use of the stirring "It's Been a Long Time" from Southside's *Better Days* album. . . . Southside himself guested on *The Sopranos*, blowing harp behind Nancy Sinatra. It was literally a blink-and-you'd-miss-it cameo—but on the plus side, that meant he survived the show intact. Not many are so lucky.

VOTE!: Springsteen's 2006 outing never quite got the high profile that, in our humble opinion, it deserved, but several year-end lists gave props. *Billboard's* panel of critics chose *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* as the number-two album of 2006, just behind Bob Dylan's *Modern Times*. *USA Today's* Jerry Shriver picked the Sessions Band's set at the 2006 New Orleans Jazz Fest as his best travel experience of the year. And the *Star Tribune's* Jon Bream tapped the St. Paul gig as his favorite show: "it was so exhilarating to see rock's unrivaled live master have so much fun—

something I hadn't witnessed since first seeing him in a club in 1975." . . . As election season begins way too early, get ready for Bruce music on the stump, appropriate or not. After the recent mid-terms, Joe Lieberman had "The Rising" blaring before his victory speech. Democrat John Hall (and former lead singer of Orleans), who won an upset in the New York Congressional race, actually sang Little Steven's "I Am a Patriot" to celebrate. Not to be outdone, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg had a laugh at Presidential race rumors by performing a "Born to Run" parody at his Christmas party, playing Boss dress-up '84-style, complete with wig and bandana. We vote noooo! . . . In addition to bidding farewell to three Jersey Shore musicians [see page 26], we also note with sadness the passing of Michael Brecker, 57, renowned jazz saxophonist who played on *Born to Run*; Danial Shapiro, 48, brother-in-law of Soozie Tyrell and choreographer of *Anytown: Stories of America* (a Shapiro and Smith Dance company performance set to the music of Springsteen, Tyrell, and Patti Scialfa); and "Long Black Veil" songwriter Marjohn Wilkin, 86. Rest in peace. ➤

Don't you weep: Sessions Band set a winner

The Dubliners


By John Howie, Jr.

On June 5, Springsteen fans around the globe were treated to what has become—albeit a little erratically—something of a tradition in the last several years: a professionally filmed and recorded, commercially available document of the Boss's most recent tour. While a planned *Devils & Dust* tour souvenir went M.I.A. when the 2005 Boston shoot wasn't deemed up-to-snuff, Springsteen's 2006 outing thankfully hasn't suffered the same fate. Released as a DVD, a two-CD set, a combination two-CD/DVD set, and (for those of you keeping up with the latest advancements in viewing technology) Blu-ray disc, *Live in Dublin* presents the Seeger Sessions tour in an ideal "little" light: 23 songs total, 21 of them arranged sequentially to make up a representative show from the three-night Point stand in Dublin, Ireland in November, 2006. Of the two bonus cuts, "We Shall Overcome," is also taken from these same Dublin concerts—while there might

not have been a place for it in the flow of the "show" recreated here, it was surely too integral to the tour to leave off this set. A rare version of "Love of the Common People," in truer bonus track form, was apparently recorded in Spain.

One thing that sets *Live in Dublin* apart from other commercially available Bruce videos is the fact that it documents a part of Springsteen's career that—relative to, say, the 1999 reunion tour—not many people actually got to see. I'll be the first to admit that I missed the boat on the *We Shall Overcome* tour (the closest gig was five hours away on Memorial Day weekend, and Springsteen never made the return trip to the U.S. that many of us were hoping for). Watching this set in high definition is, at least for now, the closest folks like me will get to experiencing the newly-dubbed "Sessions Band" in concert, which in and of itself would be cause for celebration. When you factor in the presence of Emmy and Grammy award-winning editor Thom Zimny, fresh off his amazing work on the *Born to Run* 30th Anniversary DVDs, you've got the recipe for a real winner.

And a winner it is. From the opening bars of the newly minor-chord-laden arrangement of "Atlantic City," right through to the fantastic finale of an almost Klezmer-like reinvention of "Blinded by the Light," *Live in Dublin* delivers the goods, taking in damn near every form of traditional American—and some non-American—music along the way. Captured in front of



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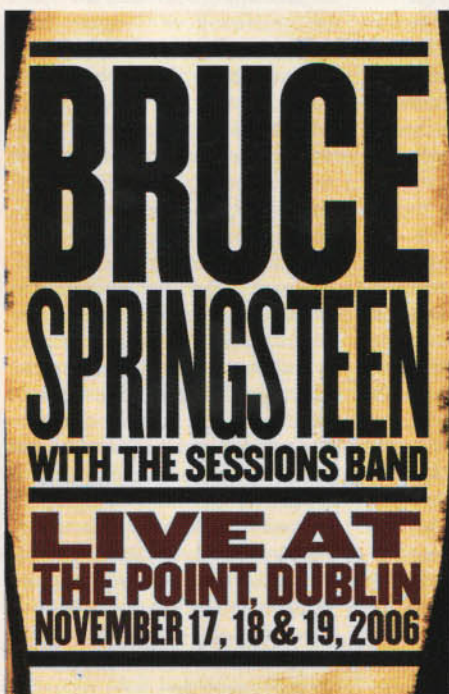
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LIVE IN DUBLIN
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
WITH THE SESSIONS BAND

an extremely excited but not too overly rowdy crowd, the video presents Bruce and the band at what must have been the peak of their powers as a touring unit. Enthusiastic and on fire by the time they reached Dublin, the penultimate stop of their multi-leg 2006 tour, it's hard to imagine the group—or any group for that matter—sounding as tight and well-rehearsed, while at the same time displaying such an incredible amount of passion, as Bruce and the Sessions Band do here.

Highlights are plentiful, but if pressed I'd have to pick the reworked versions of Springsteen

classics as some of the real winners here: along with the aforementioned "Atlantic City," you get fantastic renditions of "If I Should Fall Behind" (performed as a beautiful waltz-time duet with Patti Scialfa), "Highway Patrolman," and, my personal favorite, the Chuck Berry-meets-Big Joe Turner take on "Open All Night," in all their newfound Sessions (big) Band glory. I could also go on about the Hank Williams-meets-Bob Wills-meets-Dixieland Jazz version of "My Oklahoma Home," or the Wilco-at-Stax rendition of "Long Time Comin'," but you



**BRUCE
SPRINGSTEEN
WITH THE SESSIONS BAND
LIVE AT
THE POINT, DUBLIN
NOVEMBER 17, 18 & 19, 2006**

Left: An 11" x 17" poster given away with *Live in Dublin* by FYE stores. Above: Select U.S. cities got a one-night-only theatrical showing of a 90-minute cut of *Live in Dublin* on "release eve," June 4.



get the picture. Heck, the footage of Bruce and Marc Anthony "Chocolate Genius" Thompson sharing the mic on "Eyes on the Prize," is worth the price of admission alone.

Make sure not to shut down the player after the credits roll; you'd miss out on a neat little Easter egg: a casual hallway rehearsal of "Cadillac Ranch" that incorporates elements of Junior Parker's Elvis Presley-recorded "Mystery Train."

Pre-release trailers and advance screenings have generated a level of grousing from some circles, mostly over what has become the slightly controversial use of MTV-style "quick cuts," and the multiple cameras (nine in all) that were employed. While the overuse of the technique could have been a nightmare, at its best—in the fashion it is mostly used in *Live in Dublin*—it's an effective way of covering a lot of ground within an allotted time frame; and indeed, there is an awful lot of ground to cover here. Keeping track of Bruce on stage alone can be difficult; an energetic Bruce combined with 17 other lively musicians would be near impossible to capture on video without at least a few quick cuts. And these are musicians one really wants to see! Greg Liszt on banjo, all of the horn players, Charlie Giordano's accordion, Soozie Tyrell and Sam Bardfeld's violin strokes... I, for one, would have felt a little cheated without the opportunity to witness up close all of the onstage excitement—not to mention the amazing pedal steel guitar and dobro by Marty Rifkin, whose other credits include Dwight Yoakam—surely an impossible task without a few jarring moments here and there.



Zimny and crew have also come under advance fire for the more shadowy, less brightly lit tone of the film. While I would have been disappointed in this technique were it used for an E Street Band release, it seems appropriate to my eyes in the context of this particular set-up. The lighting on the stage itself is very reasonable, serving to spotlight the featured performer at any given time during the concert. It also serves the music well, adding an extra edge to the feel of the sparser, minor key tracks, while at the same time distinguishing even more between this and, say, *Live in Barcelona*.

One key difference between the *Live in Dublin* releases and previous Springsteen long form videos lies in the various formats available. Perhaps not wishing to revisit past criticisms (i.e., the *Born to Run* box set's Hammersmith Odeon '75, which was subsequently offered on CD), Sony has wisely decided to offer the DVD and two-CD set as one package right out of the gate that retails for less than the cost of the two individually. The video also marks the first Springsteen release to be made available in the new Blu-Ray format (pictured here).

Live in Dublin is an effective concert souvenir, from a tour that, again, a lot of us—at least in the States—didn't get to experience first-hand. As such, and as pure entertainment, it succeeds in doing its job, and all of the onstage action bears repeated viewings, as well. While it may not be enough to change the mind of the *Seeger Sessions* naysayer—and I emphasize the may in that statement—it certainly made a believer out of someone who, having not seen the tour, was on the fence. 🐾

PAY ME MY MONEY DOWN

Pledge drive premium: sure beats a tote bag

If you can't get enough *Live in Dublin*, look to the PBS Exclusive CD, which rescues another five tracks from the cutting room floor. PBS stations are airing *Live in Dublin* over the summer, and in conjunction they're offering this audio disc of exclusive live outtakes, available only as a "gift" for making a pledge in support of public television. The required donation level may vary from station to station; while it may not come cheap, it's for a good cause, and if you're a fan of the tour's rearrangements, you can't go wrong here. All five tracks are Sessions Band versions of Springsteen originals: "Bobby Jean," "Growin' Up," "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Johnny 99," "For You," and "My City of Ruins."



ON THE RADIO: Bruce lent his vocals to the track "Broken Radio" by Springsteen endorsee and former D Generation member Jesse Malin, from Malin's March 20th Adeline/East West release, *Glitter in the Gutter*. The track was picked as the first video from the album, with Bruce kindly putting in an appearance. In addition to the album version, collectors can get a different mix of the duet by

picking up the single. And that's "single" in the old-school sense: yep, Bruce on a vinyl 45, a rare thing these days. The seven-inch released overseas by One Little Indian features the Dave Bascombe Radio Mix of "Broken Radio" as the A-side, presented in a cardboard sleeve with a pic label, and featuring Malin's non-LP track "Sister Christian Where Are You Now" on the flip. An import CD single includes the album version of "Broken Radio" as well as the two tracks from the seven-inch.

GO WEST: The February 20 Sony release of *We All Love Ennio Morricone*, a tribute album consisting of tracks written by the master of the Italian Western score, has Bruce contributing a track along with the likes of Quincy Jones, Metallica, Celine Dion (!) and others. Springsteen's version of Morricone's title theme from Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (a song Bruce used as he took the stage at the June 6, 2005 stop of the *Devils & Dust* tour in Rome) is riveting, featuring the backing of a full orchestra conducted by the maestro himself. Bruce's fiery guitar track—recorded at Thrill Hill—blends beautifully with Morricone's orchestration. Bravo!

HAVE YOU SEEN THE BRIDGE?: Though these aren't technically on disc—at least, not until you burn them yourself—two tracks from Bruce's performance at Neil Young's October 13, 1986 Bridge School Benefit are now available through iTunes. "Helpless" (with Young) and "Born in the U.S.A." are part of *The Bridge School Collection Vol. 2*, and these tracks—from the show that gave us the "Fire" video—can be yours for 99 cents a piece.

ALSO OUT: The *Musicares Person of the Year Tribute Honoring James Taylor* DVD consists of 13 tracks by various performers like the Dixie Chicks, Sting, and Bruce, who performs Taylor's more obscure "Millworker." JT himself, speaking to the *New York Times*, called Springsteen's version of the track "much more fierce and furious" than his own rendition. . . . Amazon.com is currently offering exclusive DVDs of the *Charlie Rose Show*, including the December 20, 1998 episode, "A Conversation With Bruce Springsteen." It's a great interview from just prior to the reunion tour—Springsteen discusses the then-freshly-released *Tracks* box set, among other things, and closes out the show with an acoustic "Born in the U.S.A." —JHJ

Springsteen ponies up

Rock 'n' Roll High School

Mr. and Mrs. Springsteen introduced themselves to their kids' new teachers in September in quite a memorable fashion—from the Stone Pony's concert stage. Reprising his role of school fundraiser, now for the Ranney School, Springsteen held his own brand of back-to-school special in Asbury Park, just two weeks before heading to Europe to continue the Seeger Sessions tour. While Rumson Country Day School had been the recipient of such generosity in previous years, Bruce did Ranney one better, recently bookending the school year with a second benefit show.

School's In

Faculty from the Ranney School as well as the parents of Ranney students were treated to a very secretive (and by all accounts rousing and sweaty), two-hour show by the Springsteens on September 17 at the Pony. The Ranney benefit show continues the tradition the couple started some years ago of playing a private show as a unique fundraiser for their children's grade school (high-priced tickets are sold exclusively to parents to raise funds for the school; teachers attend for free.)

With the last of the Springsteen children leaving their longtime grade school and heading to secondary school, it was not known whether the fundraising shows—regarded as dream shows by many fans because of their unusual setlists combining rare covers and road-house originals—would continue. In the end, apparently, Bruce didn't want the gang at Ranney to feel slighted. Either that, or he just felt the need to rock.

Because rock the night did, featuring classic covers like Wilson Pickett's soulful "634-5789," a full "Detroit Medley" (including "Devil With the Blue Dress," "Good Golly, Miss Molly," "C.C. Rider," and "Jenny Take a Ride"),



Southside and Bruce, September 17, 2006.

a horn-infused "Seven Nights to Rock," and a gritty "Further On (Up The Road)." As at every school benefit show so far, Bobby Bandiera provided the house band. Patti Scialfa, who did not attend the last such fundraiser due to illness, stole the spotlight from her husband for a good part of this show, stepping up for "Tell Him," "Boy from New York City," and "Sugar, Sugar" (all listed on the setlist as possibilities for the ninth song of the night—they wound up doing them all), and later in the set, "Son of a Preacher Man."

Southside Johnny is a regular guest star at these shows, though he usually makes it a point to

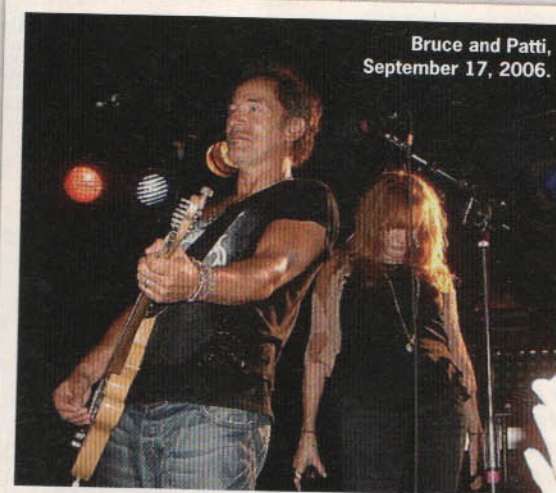
inform everyone in the crowd about his personal disdain for school and teachers. In another setlist change, the South shared the microphone for an audible of "I Don't Wanna Go Home." The night concluded with a loose "Darlington County" into a high-energy "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" and finally a show-closing "Twist and Shout," during which Bruce continued yet another tradition—inviting the school's headmaster and teachers on stage to share the microphone for the final song.

All in all, a pretty good way to start off the school year.

School's Out

With the school year winding down and final exams just around the corner, Bruce did some last-minute cramming of his own in preparation for a surprising second Ranney High benefit show at the end of April. Foregoing the usual one- or two- song sound-check, Bruce used the four hours prior to showtime to run Bobby Bandiera and his band through an exhaustive rehearsal. They tried out practically every song from the night's show—plus a few which did not make the set, like "I'm Goin' Down," "Seaside Bar Song" and "Son of a Preacher Man." Even after all that practice, band members were still left cramming to learn new material added late to the setlist, as evidenced by sax man Eddie Manion heading out to retrieve new sheet music from his car ten minutes to showtime.

With such a lengthy sound-check/rehearsal—and considering this was the second show in seven months for the same Ranney crowd—one might have thought the show was shaping up as a throwback to the early Rumson Country Day School shows, full of rarely played cover



Bruce and Patti, September 17, 2006.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ① 634- | 13. Fever |
| 2. Talk To Me | 14. Bad Moon |
| 3. 7 Nights | 14. Seaside Bar |
| 4. 2 Hearts | 15. Darlington |
| 5. Spirit | 16. Bad Moon |
| 6. Rendezvous | 17. Stand on It |
| 7. From Small Things | 18. Hold on |
| 8. All That Heaven | 19. Shake |
| 9. Tell Him or Boy from N.Y.C. | 20. 10th Ave Detroit |
| 10. Sugar Sugar Son of a Preacher | 21. Twist |
| 11. Further on up Rd. | |
| 12. Sunny Day | |

songs. Instead, Bruce chose to go the "greatest hits" route, maintaining the same basic setlist from the past few benefits but beefing it up the with popular songs that the casual fan would recognize. So rather than "You Really Got a Hold on Me," "Ramblin' Gamblin' Man," and "Hey Tonight," the crowd got "Cover Me," "Brilliant Disguise," and "Dancing in the Dark."

Many of the Springsteen songs added to this year's setlist benefited from the horn section accompanying Bruce and the band on stage. "Cadillac Ranch" had the extra punch it had on the *Tunnel of Love* tour, as did "Cover Me." And the "Peter Gunn" riffs thrown in during the chorus of "Pink Cadillac" gave it a dirty little blues groove ten times better than the official release.

Thankfully, cover songs were not abandoned entirely. "634-5789," a mainstay of these shows, is Springsteen at his rock 'n' soul best. A less frenetic "Seven Nights to Rock" was simply a clinic in Asbury Park bar band rock 'n' roll. In addition to singing back-up most of the night, Patti Scialfa reprised her standards from the fall show,



You guys again?
Southside and Bruce,
April 29, 2007.

taking lead on "Tell Him" and "Boy From New York City." And she added a new one to her

repertoire: the Rolling Stones' "Time Is on My Side," which allowed Patti and her husband to exchange vocals in a unique way. She sang lead, and Bruce handled the spoken monologue that occurs at the song's midpoint, sounding every bit the gravel-voiced, gospel preacher.

Southside Johnny again made a guest appearance for several songs and was responsible for some interesting moments during "Talk to Me," when he took it upon himself to start bringing members of the crowd up on stage to join him. Afterward, Bruce addressed the craziness with a simple, off-the-cuff "South ... side ... Johnny!"

Before the encores, Bruce and Patti took a few moments to draw and announce the numbers of the winning raffle tickets for the school's fundraising raffle. The show concluded a little more than two hours after it began—and the same way it did in September—with "Twist and Shout." Plus, a promise that the tradition of school benefit shows would indeed continue: "We'll see you next year!"

Whether he meant the beginning of the next school year or the end—or perhaps both again—remains to be seen. 🐾

Pencils Up! Sept. 17, 2006

634-5789
Talk to Me
Seven Nights to Rock
Two Hearts
Spirit in the Night
Rendezvous
From Small Things
All That Heaven Will Allow
Tell Him *
Boy From New York City *
Sugar Sugar *
Further On (Up the Road)
Waitin' on a Sunny Day
The Fever
I Don't Want to Go Home **
Son of a Preacher Man *
Seaside Bar Song
Darlington County
Tenth Avenue Freeze-out
Detroit Medley
Twist and Shout

*featuring Patti Scialfa
**featuring Southside Johnny

Pencils Down! April 29, 2007

Cadillac Ranch
634-5789
Cover Me
Spirit in the Night
From Small Things (Big Things One Day Come)
Two Hearts
Rendezvous
Brilliant Disguise *
Tell Him *
Time is on My Side *
Further On (Up the Road)
Waitin' on a Sunny Day
Seven Nights to Rock
The Fever **
Can I Get a Witness/Everybody Needs Somebody to Love **
Talk to Me **
Darlington County
Man's Job
Pink Cadillac
Tenth Avenue Freeze-out
Boy from NYC *
Dancing in the Dark
Twist and Shout



1. Tom Waits
Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers, and Bastards
ANTI- (4CD)

2. The Hold Steady
Boys and Girls in America
Vagrant (CD)

3. Jason Falkner
I'm OK You're OK
Noise McCartney (Japan CD)

4. Bright Eyes
Cassadaga
Saddle Creek (CD)

5. Bjork
Volta
Atlantic (CD)

6. Jeremy Enigk
World Waits
Lewis Hollow/Reincarnate (CD)

7. Arcade Fire
Neon Bible
Merge (2LP)

8. Bob Dylan
Modern Times
Sony/Columbia (CD)

9. Various Artists
Cult Cargo: Belize City Boil Up
Numero Group (CD)

10. Paul Williams
Someday Man
Collector's Choice (CD)

10 records
that helped make
this issue possible

Old friends, new sounds on Nils' latest

Lofgren's Loaded *Weapon*

By Anthony D'Amato

With a good portion of his professional life spent playing alongside such rock 'n' roll luminaries as Bruce Springsteen, Neil Young, and Ringo Starr, it's not unreasonable to think of Nils Lofgren as a perennial sideman. That's not entirely accurate, though. Lofgren has spent his fair share of time fronting bands, too, and his latest solo record—his fifteenth—demonstrates once again that he's much more than just a lead guitarist. *Sacred Weapon* is one of Lofgren's finest releases, showing off his gift for songcraft as he tackles tough issues like war and death with the grizzled maturity of his bosses.

It didn't come that quickly for Lofgren, though.

"Since the last E Street Band tour, *The Rising* tour, I've been chipping away, writing songs, trying not to edit my writing," he tells *Backstreets*. "Once I got maybe 20 songs or so that I felt really good about, I started making plans for recording."

Though he often finds inspiration on the road with Springsteen, Lofgren tries to keep his solo career separate from his band one.

"When I'm on the road, I get ideas and I have a notebook, so I'll jot down... thematic ideas," he explains. "I write melodies all the time, so if I get a riff I like, I might throw it on a little boom-box and just store it. When I'm with the E Street Band, I'm also kind of the swingman of the band, because we have four guitarists, so I learned pedal steel, some dobro, lap steel, six-string banjo, bottleneck..." he continues. "So I usually spend most of the day working on these new instruments, and of course the set and the shows and the many, many great songs Bruce has that may appear without notice in the middle of the show. But I do log ideas as I go."

Sacred Weapon is steeped in country music, with twangy acoustic guitars, fiddles, and harmonies galore. The album's opening track, "In Your Hands," is in fact a duet with country legend Willie Nelson.



Nils celebrates *Sacred Weapon*'s release at Jack's Music Shoppe in Red Bank, NJ.

"When Willie sang at the Kennedy Center honors last December to honor Robert Redford," Lofgren recalls, "his guitarist was ill for a while, [so] they asked me to play rhythm guitar for him. And he was kind enough to jump on his bus after the morning rehearsal and come out to Virginia and do a beautiful duet with me."

Nelson's not the only guest on the album; David Crosby and

Graham Nash show up, too, if you listen carefully.

"Crosby and Nash are dear old friends from the '60s with Neil Young," explains Lofgren, who left his Maryland home at the age of 18 to join Young's band on tour and in the studio for the recording of *After the Gold Rush*. "I played them 'Frankie Hang On,' and they really liked the song... they offered to sing that signature harmony that they do on it."

The stand-out track on the record is "Whiskey Holler," a melancholy acoustic piece that highlights the tremendous character Lofgren can draw from his weathered voice. Even though the majority of the songs are tinged with a country feel, there are quite a few straight-ahead rock 'n' roll songs on the album, too. "Come a Day" sounds like an unreleased Springsteen track, and "Mr. Hardcore" is a kind of tongue-in-cheek hard rock song, though it still comes off as a sincere tribute to friend and former Neil Young producer David Briggs.

While some of the songs, like "Mr. Hardcore" and the more delicate "Tried and True," are quite personal tributes from Lofgren, others were inspired by second-hand experiences Lofgren came across in the writing process.

"My wife, Amy, wanted to help an injured soldier from the

YOUR BODY — OF WORK — IS A WONDERLAND

Lofgren talked to *Backstreets* in 2002 about the frustration of having much of his music—essentially, everything pre-1995—owned by record companies. "Most of my old records are out of print," he said in *Backstreets* #72. "I've asked them to put them back in print, and they've refused. It's just standard show-biz stuff: on the books I owe them tons of money, and I'm like, 'Gee, why don't we make some of these records available? I know my fans want to buy them.' They say, 'We're not interested.' And I'm like, 'So now the record is out of print, no one can get it, and I can't even sell 100 copies to help you make some money back?' It's a tough Catch-22."

Asked specifically about *Wonderland*, his sought-after, out-of-print 1983 album, Lofgren confirmed it was the same story: "Backstreet/MCA owns it. I can't convince them to reissue it or put it out, and I can't buy it from them. They just don't even want to take time to have a dialogue about any of it with me."

Now the good news. Fast forward to April 2007, and *Wonderland* is finally available again on CD, thanks to American Beat Records. In January, the upstart American Beat began a reissue series of interest to Boss fans, reminiscent of *Razor & Tie* in the mid-'90s. Their new pressing of *Wonderland*, with the album's original 11 tracks, adds a new foreword from Nils. Also on tap from American Beat: the Robert Gordon two-fer, *Robert Gordon with Link Wray / Fresh Fish Special*, which includes both studio and live versions of Springsteen's "Fire"; the domestic release of a must-have Gary U.S. Bonds two-fer, *Dedication / On the Line*; and John Eddie's self-titled album from 1986. How about getting more Nils material out of record company limbo? A rep for the label tells us, "There is a very good chance that we will be releasing more albums from him in the near future." We'll hope the beat goes on.

—Christopher Phillips



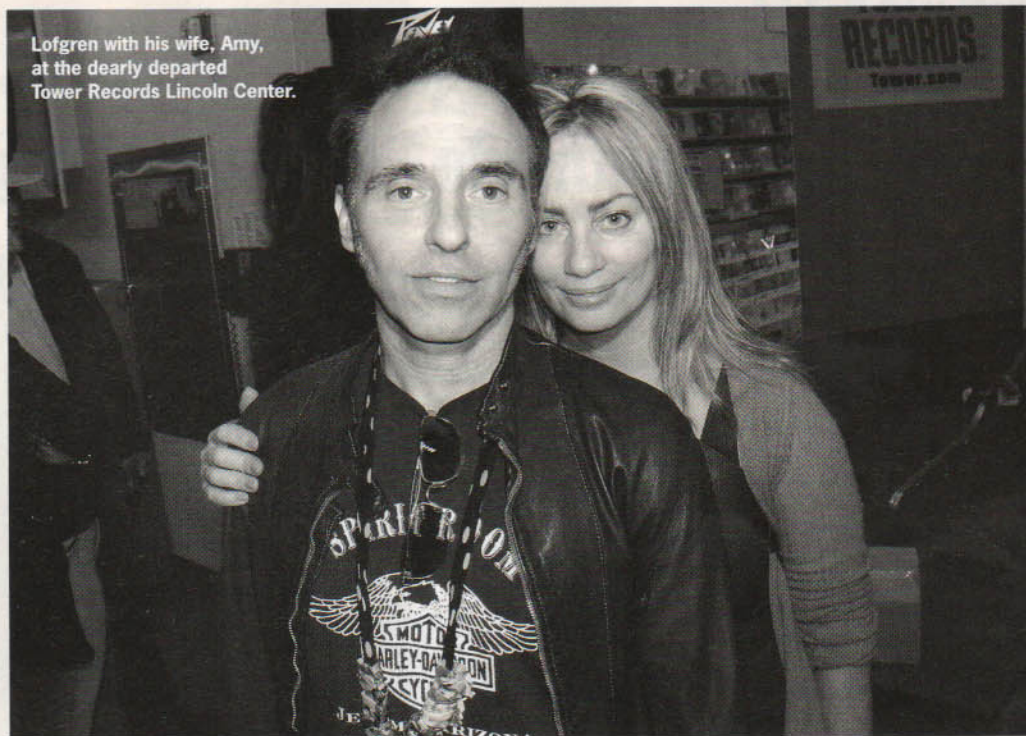
Iraq war," Lofgren says, "and she was able to locate a husband and wife, and we tried to make their Christmas a little better. We got to talking to them a bit, and they were very kind people. This soldier, who was severely injured, wanted to get well and go back—because that's his training, and he was passionate about doing his job and helping his country. His wife felt like, 'Hey, you know, you just got the hell blown out of you, maybe it's time to stay home.'"

"I took that to a lot more adversarial position," explains Lofgren of "Frankie Hang On," "but that's where I got the concept of the song. I'm a big supporter of our troops—I don't have the courage to do what they do."

Lofgren seems a little tentative about broaching the subject of politics at first, but he continues with increasing confidence.

"I don't believe that this is a great war, and I don't believe it's being handled well at all by our government.... Personally, I thought, with the world com-

Lofgren with his wife, Amy, at the dearly departed Tower Records Lincoln Center.



munity behind us (which is a rare thing these days), we should have sent those 150,000 troops to

Afghanistan, and whether they found Osama or not, if we'd been there for three years that country would be 20 years further along than it is.

"During these last few years," he continues, "the administration could have continued to try and build support to go into the next trouble spot, whether it's Iraq or somewhere else... but meanwhile, [Amy and I] are huge supporters of the troops, and we'd love to see them being directed a lot more efficiently and caringly."

"But I haven't seen much common-sense government since I was born," he adds dryly.

Whether or not you agree with his politics, *Sacred Weapon* is worth the listen, and seeing Lofgren in concert really brings the songs to life. If you thought you heard some great guitar playing from him with the E Street Band in some large, sterile "Bank of This or That Stadium," just wait until you see him front his own band in your local, sweaty rock 'n' roll club.

"Honestly, my job on any stage is to get lost in the music instantly (and try to stay lost in it), trust my instincts, and feed off the energy of the crowd, which is huge for me. You do a lot of preparing before you walk out," he explains, "but it's actually a bit easier to get lost in the music instantly in front of a little crowd in a club because

there are people on top of you. You walk out in a stadium, you have to be careful not to start being an observer of a spectacle—which is a beautiful spectacle, but sometimes I need to focus a little harder on ignoring the crowd visually and sensing their emotional energy instead. I might go through four or five songs before I'll look at the crowd in a big place, just to try to get deep down into the music and feel like I'm lost in it before I look around. Whereas in a club, no matter where you look you see people, you see faces, you sense them breathing on you. In general, it's a bit easier to get that 'lost' focus in a smaller place."

And though it's been quite some time since Lofgren last headed out on a full solo tour of the U.S. and Europe, the wait has recharged his spirits and made him hungrier than ever to bring his songs to the fans.

"For me, it's fresher when you take a break—but not take a break and do nothing, take a break and do other musical things. I've been lucky to be in some extraordinary bands with Ringo Starr, Neil Young, Bruce, all those guys," says Lofgren. "It's been really good for my musical soul."

Visit www.nilslofgren.com for updated tour dates, guitar lessons, and free song downloads.

24TH STREET LULLABY?

2007 brings Nils to NJ, backing Scialfa in the studio

In mid-February, Nils spoke with WCHR's Tom Cunningham about his recent jaunts to the Garden State, where he's reprising his role as a member of Patti Scialfa's band. Scialfa's follow-up to *23rd Street Lullaby* is tentatively scheduled for June.

TC: On the Backstreets.com website there was a news item about three or four weeks ago, about you being in the great state of New Jersey doing some recording.

NL: Well you know, there have been two or three trips these last few months: Patti started another beautiful record, I must say. [2004's] *23rd Street Lullaby*, it was great to participate in that; actually, what was fabulous, her producer, Steve Jordan, who's an old buddy, put an amazing band together with Patti. We got to go play some shows and do some TV promotion—just an amazing group of players. Of course, I love to be in a great band, and I've had an opportunity to be in quite a few special bands, and that was one of 'em.

So I'm glad she's started another record, and it sounds beautiful. It's actually got kind of a... I don't know, kind of a really cool, live, R&B kind of soul vibe to it, without being forced. It reminds me a little of Sly & the Family Stone, and a little bit of *Tonight's the Night*—only in the recording sense, in that we're doing a lot of live stuff in the studio. Right now there's not a lot of crafting or overdubbing going on, because the live thing has got a real vibe to it. So she's in the early stages of a new record. I certainly wouldn't want to speak for Patti as to her plans as to when, how and if she'll share it... but she's on the road to another great record, and that's what I've been doing up there occasionally.

Tom Cunningham is the host of the *Bruce Brunch*, the weekly all-Bruce Springsteen radio program at the Jersey Shore, Sunday mornings from 9 to 11 on 105.7 The Hawk. Listen live at www.1057thehawk.com.

Sailing into the Jukes' fourth decade

Southside, Ye Scurvy Dog!

By Mike Saunders

In March 1975, the Blackberry Booze Band became Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, and the rest is history. A long history, which has seen successive band members, managers, record executives, producers, club owners and tour managers come and go. Throughout the years, Southside has continued to belt out his particular brand of rock, soul, blues, and R&B thousands of times in clubs, theatres and arenas in North America, Europe and Japan. On Independence Day weekend 2005, the band celebrated their 30th anniversary on the New Jersey shore with concerts at the House of Blues in Atlantic City and the Stone Pony in Asbury Park. Later that year, they released *Into the Harbour*, the third new Asbury Jukes studio album in five years.

The album kicks off with a storming version of the 1972 Jagger/Richards classic "Happy" (from *Exile on Main Street*) and closes with the pounding "Nothing But a Heartache," an R&B hit for all-girl group The Flirtations in the late '60s. Slotted between these powerful bookends are versions of "You're My Girl (I Don't Want to Discuss It)" previously recorded by Little Richard, Delaney and Bonnie and Friends, and Rhinoceros, among others; "Hang Down Your Head" by Tom Waits from his 1985 release *Rain Dogs*; and "All in My Mind," a hit for Maxine Brown in 1960. In contrast to the rowdy

arrangements of the various covers, three of the four original songs on the album are mid-tempo dramas of heartbreak and longing, with atmospheric lyrical references to seabirds at sunset and the moon pulling at the tide. The title track is a contemplative ballad that name-checks Odysseus, Polynesian women, Captain James Cook and "lustful old Captain Hook."

The album features performances by the current Jukes line-up, which comprises Chris Anderson (trumpet), Bobby Bandiera (guitar), Joe Bellia (drums), Jeff Kazee (keyboards), Ed Manion (baritone sax), Muddy Shews (bass), and Joey Stann (tenor sax). Part-timers Mark Pender (trumpet) and Richie "La Bamba" Rosenberg (trombone) appear nightly with the Max Weinberg 7 on NBC's *Late Night With Conan O'Brien* show but continue to perform with the Jukes whenever possible. British-born trombone player Neal Pawley often deputizes for La Bamba and on at least one occasion has played alongside him in a six-piece horn section.

It's an indication of the high regard in which members of the Jukes are held that two New Jersey superstars have borrowed members of the band in the past year. In November 2005, as *Into the Harbour* was released, Bandiera and Kazee were recruited by Jon Bon Jovi to augment the regular line-up for Bon Jovi's *Have a Nice Day* world tour, which kept them occupied for nine months. In the



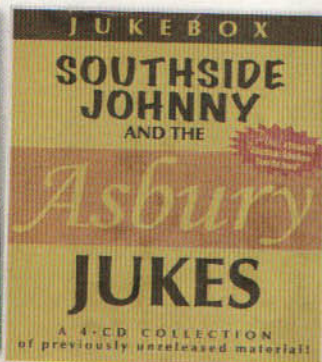
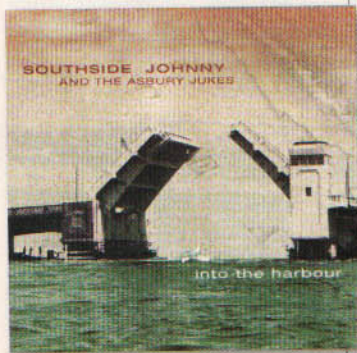
DAVE PERCIVAL PHOTO

spring of 2006, Manion, Pender and La Bamba joined the Seeger Sessions Band and took part in Bruce Springsteen's Asbury Park rehearsal shows, his performance at Jazzfest in New Orleans and his U.S. tour in June. Manion was also included in the line-up for Bruce's European tours in May and October/November.

Between the summer of 2005 and fall of 2006, with numerous core members of the Jukes out on loan, replacements being road-tested and arrivals and departures taking place on an almost weekly basis, Southside somehow kept the band on the road. During this period the Jukes appeared at their regular haunts on the east coast, performed in California, Florida, and Ohio, and undertook two European tours. Although Bandiera and Kazee returned to play with the band during breaks in the Bon Jovi tour, they were replaced for the duration by Ricky Byrd and Bobby Lynch. Several other musicians also stood in occasionally, including Tony Tino (bass),

Glenn Alexander (guitar), Ralph Notaro (guitar) and the band's original keyboard player, Kevin Kavanaugh. Regular concertgoers not only witnessed Southside tearing up the set list from night to night, but also watched the line-up undergo similar changes with confusing frequency. The full-time Jukes reconvened in late 2006 and celebrated New Year's Eve at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, New Jersey, where several past members of the band (including original drummer Kenny Pentifallo) made guest appearances.

In early 2007, the band released *Jukebox*, a four-disc box set containing rare and previously unreleased studio, live, full-band and acoustic recordings from various points throughout their career. A bonus fifth CD of highlights from their performance at the 2001 *Jukestock* convention is also included, as is a 40-page booklet featuring rare photographs, memorabilia, a historical essay and a highly detailed 30-year timeline which lists selected con-



certs, album releases, TV and radio appearances, line-up changes and other events.

The box includes the original demo of *I Don't Want to Go Home* (1975), live recordings from the Roxy in Los Angeles (1977) and the Savoy in New York (1981), demos of songs destined for *The Jukes* (1979) and *At Least We Got Shoes* (1986), covers of "Expressway to Your Heart" (1987) and "Dark End of the Street" (1999), songs from rare EPs ("Rosa," "Blue Radio," "Time is Running Wild"), plus live takes of Bobby Bandiera's "C'mon Caroline" (1989) and "Into the Harbour" (2006). Containing over 80 songs, *Jukebox* provides a fascinating glimpse into the Asbury Jukes archives and is a major addition to the band's ever-expanding discography.

Contacting Southside by e-mail, I asked him about the albums, the anniversary, and his plans for the future.

What influenced your choice of covers for *Into the Harbour*?

It was the usual modus operandi. I had written some songs that had a Philly soul feel, and I started to get the urge to record. I looked in my box of covers—a frightening hodgepodge of scraps of paper with song titles scribbled on them, songs I've wanted to do over the years—and picked out the ones that seemed to fit. I don't worry about a cohesive feel; I just like to get a bunch of tunes together that the band can wail on and I can sing half-decently. So we went into Jon Bon Jovi's studio, learned the songs, and recorded them in four days.

You co-wrote three songs with Jukes keyboard player Jeff Kazee, and a fourth is credited to Lyon, Kazee and Felix Cavaliere. What's the story behind these collaborations?

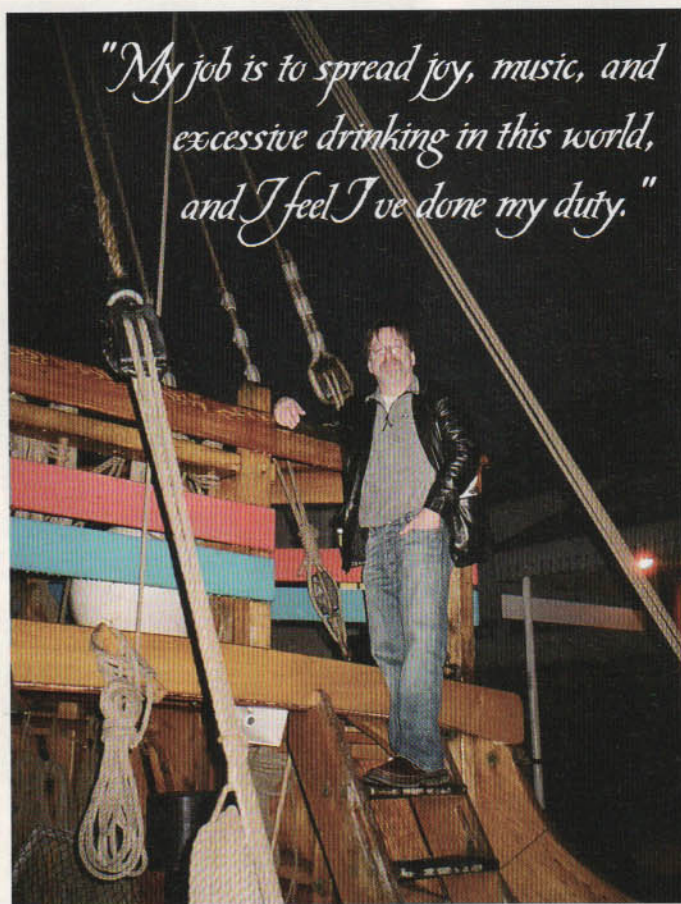
Jeff and I write very well together. Either he has an idea, or I do, and we hit the ground running. He's one of the easiest people I've ever written with. Felix is the great singer and songwriter from the Rascals. He is a friend of Garry Tallent's and lives in Nashville. I went to visit Garry, he called Felix and said, "Southside wants to write." Felix came over, and *voila*, two songs in a half-hour. He's a swell fellow and has amazing stories.

The title track is written from the point of view of a traveller coming home for the final time. Hopefully you have no plans to do the same just yet, but would you say you've mellowed over the years?

Fuck yeah, I've mellowed! I can't quit until my mortgage

On your website, you've referred to a Big Band album of Tom Waits songs that you've been working on with La Bamba. How advanced is the project, and is the man himself involved at all?

It's 90 percent finished. It takes a heap of time for La Bamba to write charts for 18 wacko musi-



does, but there is a realization that time is running out on this life, and I would like to have a few years spent in quiet reflection.

You've just put out *Jukebox*, a retrospective box set. Are there any special memories associated with the material? Or is it all just a blur?

I can recall some of the fun times at Steve Becker's studio in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and the sense of being in total control for the first time. No Steven [Van Zandt], no record company, no money. We eventually got on a label and it all turned to shit, but the freedom—which I have regained, thanks to the internet—was exhilarating. Most of the other stuff in the box set is a mystery to me, as is life. Let's keep it that way.

cians. I love the sound of the damn thing: all those horns, Richie's great charts, and my ruined voice. Nirvana!

I am going out to California to record a duet with Tom and me bellowing and grunting at each other. Alert the authorities! I hope the whole mess gets released this spring, but no definite date yet.

Is the lack of a record deal frustrating or liberating?

Oh, please! I never want to have lunch with a music industry type again. Independent manufacturing, home studios, the internet, all have freed me from the insanity of chart lists and A&R men. For a project like the Big Band CD, we might get a record company involved, but never for my personal stuff. All I need is a pot of tea, a bottle of

whiskey, and a library card, and I'm good. Why would I let some corporate big shot dictate my life?

Do you have any regrets when you review the triumphs and disasters of the past three decades?

Willie Nelson once said, "I'd regret it if I thought it would do any good"... and I'm with him. The only thing I regret in my life is the hurt I have caused anyone. I can take the slings and arrows, but I never meant to cause pain. My job is to spread joy, music and excessive drinking in this world, and I feel I've done my duty.

As far as commercial success, I've seen what it's done to others, from bitterness to drug addiction to a massive loss of privacy. There are folks out there who really get something out of Juke music, and I'm satisfied with that.

What are your feelings about the regeneration of Asbury Park? Your past is linked to every street corner. Will you be sad to see it all go?

I'm not sad at all about what's happening in Asbury Park. I just hope the lower economic classes don't get screwed too badly. The town was a wreck. It was never going to be like it was. Here's hoping for something better. I've seen lots of towns and cities in my life, and I don't know one that has stayed exactly the same.

How do you see the next 30 years panning out? Will you still be touring when you're 80 like B.B. King?

God bless B.B.! I wanted to be like him and Ray Charles and Big Joe Turner when I started out, playing 'til I keeled over—and I guess I'm gonna have to live out my dream, as no one seems to want to pay my bills!

Now approaching his 60s, Southside Johnny Lyon is still out on the road and planning new recordings (in addition to the Big Band CD, he also hopes to release an acoustic album). His enthusiasm for singing, taste for whiskey, and sense of humor remain undiminished as he enters his fourth decade with the Jukes, and he obviously has no intention of dropping anchor or hanging up his sailing shoes just yet. 🍷

In memory of Jukes sound man Sean Giblin, who left us far too soon.

Bruce & Lucinda, a "Joy" forever

Greasy Lake meets Lake Charles

By Nick Corr

On November 10, 2006, a night off between Seeger Sessions shows in Birmingham and London, Bruce Springsteen just couldn't stay away from the stage. That night at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire, he made a guest appearance to play on a pair of songs with Lucinda Williams and her band.

Shortly after arriving at the show I noticed three guys from the Seeger Sessions Band in the bar: guitarist Frank Bruno, keyboardist Charles Giordano, and backing vocalist Curtis King. I'd only returned from the Birmingham show on the train that morning, so I congratulated the guys on how much I thought the Seeger Sessions Band had gained in stature since the initial U.K. shows earlier in the year. They were very gracious about me approaching them, and Frank quickly asked what I thought of the new arrangement of "Blinded By the Light." I told him I liked it, and that it took me a few lines to register what song they were actually playing. I mentioned how I thought they were playing a cover of Bob Dylan's "I Want You" when they started the new arrangement of "Bobby Jean"—and Charles said that's what he bases his performance on. I also congratulated Frank on the duet arrangement of "The Ghost of



Tom Joad," explaining I thought his sweet country lilt brought a new musical color to the song, and he seemed genuinely flattered. I might have overdone it when I compared his voice to John Denver—in a really good way—but they were still polite.

As you can imagine, I was going home pretty happy at this point—meeting some of the Seeger Sessions Band, and finally seeing Lucinda Williams in concert. To put things in context, this was the third attempt at this particular London show (the tickets were originally for a July 2005 show, later moved to December 2005, and then rescheduled again to November 2006), so there was already an air of great anticipation in the crowd.

Lucinda and her three-piece band played a great set of material that was very heavy on her more recent albums *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road*, *Essence*, and *World Without Tears*. Toward the end of the main set Lucinda nervously announced a special guest, telling the crowd that performing with him would be one of the highlights of her career. She then welcomed to the stage "Mr. Bruce Springsteen," at which the capacity 2,000-person crowd erupted. Bruce was pretty low-key. Wearing a dark shirt and jeans, he didn't talk to

the crowd or take the mic at all, but strapped on one of guitarist Doug Pettibone's extra guitars, an orange/red Gibson, and took a spot in the corner behind bass player Paul Bryan.

He played rhythm guitar and a couple of solos on the bluesy "Disgusted," a Lil' Son Jackson tune Lucinda covered on her 1979 debut album, *Ramblin'*. It didn't seem as though he knew the song, because Lucinda demonstrated the basic chords as he took the guitar. It was great to hear Bruce playing the electric guitar again, and he seemed to really enjoy letting it rip with some blues riffing.

Surprisingly, after the song was finished, Bruce stayed onstage and Lucinda announced they'd close the set with "Joy," from her awesome *Car Wheels* album. In her introduction to the song, Lucinda talked about making sure you don't let the government or anyone take your joy. This prompted her to announce how they were celebrating a victory in the recent U.S. election, which got a great cheer from the crowd, and Bruce pumped his fist in encouragement.

Bruce clearly knew "Joy" well, cranking out a face-melter of a solo and even playing some very distinctive, subtle strumming during the song's quieter

breakdown sections. Lucinda introduced all the members of her band—Pettibone on guitar, Bryan on bass, and Don Heffington on drums—before introducing "Bruce 'The Boss' Springsteen" once again, and he took another great solo. They stretched "Joy" out for close to ten minutes before finishing the song and the main set. Lucinda and the band returned for a single encore, "West"—the title track of her new album, which she announced would be due in early 2007—but despite being a fantastic song, it was kind of an anti-climax after a guest appearance from Bruce. 🐾

LET'S BE FRIENDS

In addition to Ms. Williams, Bruce turned up to play with other friends and inspirations in recent months—with Vote for Change tourmate John Fogerty on a New Jersey summer night, and most recently, with Brian Wilson for a Count Basie Theatre fundraiser. A Challenger surfboard crafted by Tinker West and autographed by Wilson and Springsteen was part of the Basie event's auction—not a bad piece of shore memorabilia, east coast or west.

With John Fogerty

• **Long Tall Sally**
August 5, 2006
PNC Bank Arts Center
Holmdel, NJ

With Lucinda Williams

• **Disgusted**
• **Joy**
November 10, 2006
Shepherd's Bush Empire
London, England

With Brian Wilson

• **Barbara Ann**
• **Love and Mercy**
May 12, 2007
Count Basie Theatre
Red Bank, NJ



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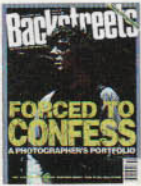
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Light of Day: "They let anyone in here!"

Bruce is back for Lucky Seven

By Lisa Iannucci

The Seventh Annual Light of Day Benefit moved from its traditional early November time slot to early December, because event founder Bob Benjamin was scheduled to have two surgical procedures [see sidebar]. The bill did not include some of the Jersey Shore's most well-known names (Southside Johnny) or favorite guests (Gary U.S. Bonds) because of scheduling conflicts. And the artist lineup was not as eclectic as it has been in prior years, when audiences had been treated to sets by the likes of the Pierces and Robert Earl Keen. But the annual benefit for Parkinson's research featured what has come to be a core group of musicians that have participated every year since the event's inception—including Joe D'Urso, JoBonanno and headliner Joe Grushecky—so while the affair held few surprises, there were, as always, many satisfying moments. Not least of these was another core participant, Bruce Springsteen, coming back to the Light of Day fold after missing the proceedings in 2005.

In December 2006, the benefit was spread out over three days, as it has been for the last couple of years. Unlike previous years, however, it was held solely at the Starland Ballroom in Sayreville, NJ, about 40 minutes northwest of Asbury Park. The first night was a Writers in the Raw event—a round robin acoustic format—featuring local favorites Willie Nile, Pat DiNizio and Joe Grushecky. The final night of the event featured ska band Streetlight Manifesto, a local favorite with a young fan base.

But the main draw, as in prior years, was the Saturday night show, capped as always by Joe Grushecky and the Houserockers. This time the night's line-up lacked some star power; the absence of artists like Jesse Malin and John Eddie, usually headliners, was keenly felt. Many of



the best moments of the night occurred on the acoustic stage in the back corner of the venue, where Jersey Shore fixtures like Bruce Tunkel (formerly of The Red House), Rob Dye, Bobby Strange and Melissa Chill turned in strong sets. Unfortunately most attendees preferred to hold their spots on the main floor, so these performances were sparsely attended.

Main stage highlights included an energetic opening set by maybe pete, a North Jersey band with ties to the Shore; a powerful solo appearance by Jeffrey Gaines; and a brief but inspiring set by Marah. Originally from Philadelphia and now based in Brooklyn, Marah has played Light of Day several times and has always brought their A-game. It was clear from the outset, how-

ever, that this night would be unusual. The sound, which was crisp for most of the evening, seemed a bit muddy during their set. And the audience didn't seem particularly inclined to pay attention, either—an atypical occurrence at a Marah gig. But there was something else in the air... a bit of tension, perhaps? The band had been onstage a scant 20 minutes when lead singer Dave

When it became apparent that Light of Day founder Bob Benjamin would be undergoing brain surgery to treat the symptoms of his Parkinson's disease, singer/songwriter Joe D'Urso volunteered to fill in.

"Bob and I have worked together since 1996, between his work with my label and on a management level," explains D'Urso, who has performed at every Light of Day since the start. "We talked several times a week [planning the shows]... and probably in the summer-time or the fall, when we knew his operation was going to happen, I told him I would step up and help him book the shows and try and put it all together."

Though Light of Day has traditionally been held in early November to coincide with Benjamin's birthday, it was postponed in order to accommodate his recovery. In two procedures, doctors implanted special electrodes into Benjamin's brain in hopes of controlling his involuntary convulsions and preventing future occurrences of an incident like the one he experienced in January 2006, when he collapsed in his apartment and was unable to get up or call for help for nearly four days.

"I don't ever remember a discussion of not having a Light of Day," says D'Urso. "We just figured, 'Okay, we'll do it in December,' and things just got pushed back a month."

While the postponement created scheduling conflicts for a few artists, most acts were able to make the December dates, including Bruce Springsteen, who sent word a few days before

Saturday's show that he would be joining the benefit's lineup. And now that LOD is in its seventh year, D'Urso found that booking the acts wasn't a tremendous challenge, especially since he and Benjamin shared many of the same contacts from their years of working together.

D'Urso, far right, with (L-R): Tony "Boccigalupe" Amato, Concerts East's Tony Pallagrosi, and Bob Benjamin.



"There were a lot of people who came back from past years," he explains. "There were a couple people who, you know, it was their first time, we reached out and contacted them, but this year it was a lot of returning friends so it was a little easier."

D'Urso also had quite a bit of professional experience behind him, as he worked for Premier Talent Agency from 1986 to 1996. "That was my first job out of school," he says. From 1996 to 2006, I was running my own management company and small label, so I think just the fact that all those years added up... and having a good idea how Light of Day

was run over the past years and just being involved, it was a pretty good model to step into. It wasn't like I reinvented the wheel—it was something that existed and had done well."

The real challenge was in the organization and running of the shows.

"It's just coordinating the whole thing,"

D'Urso says. "It's a gazillion e-mails and phone calls and all that other stuff—and in the midst of it, I was putting together our first Light of Day Europe. It got a little crazy."

Saturday night consisted of 25 bands on two stages, and it was up to D'Urso and Tony "Boccigalupe" Amato to keep everything running smoothly. If that wasn't enough, they had to worry about performing their own sets with their respective bands, Stone Caravan and the Badboys.

"The weekend before Light of Day New Jersey," D'Urso adds, "I had put together the World Hunger Year Hungerthon at the Wonder Bar in Asbury Park, a 15-act show which was a 'Bruce-fest' this year. There was one point, between the Jersey shows, the Hungerthon, and the European Light of Day tour... I sat down and thought, 'Maybe I bit off a little more than I can chew.'"

D'Urso kept his focus, though, and managed to pull off all three events without a hitch.

"I never felt afraid, like, 'Uh oh, this won't happen,'" he says. "It's like anything else, you've got to be pragmatic about it, make the phone calls... and then execute. It's really not brain surgery, it just takes time and energy."

—Anthony D'Amato

Bielanko muttered cryptically, "They let anyone in here." With that, on walked a smiling Bruce Springsteen.

The crowd seemed somewhat slow to react but soon voiced its approval as the band launched into the Eddie Floyd classic "Raise Your Hand," a tune they performed with Springsteen at Giants Stadium in the summer of 2003. Bruce grabbed the mic and prowled the edge of the stage in full soul shouter mode, exhorting the crowd, "I want you to get off your fucking seats right now and raise your hand!"—as if anyone needed any encouragement. As the song reached its climax, he leaned over the monitor at center stage and repeated the refrain, working the song into a raucous conclusion. But he wasn't done yet.

Borrowing a Gibson electric from Marah guitarist Adam Garbinski, Springsteen stepped back as the band launched into the Marah original "Reservation Girl," an unreleased song often

played as a set closer. He seemed a little lost at first, but he picked up the song's chord progression quickly and, as the song wound into its fiery, guitar-driven climax, he walked toward Dave's brother Serge and engaged him in a searing guitar duel. The older Bielanko could barely contain his joy, grinning and jumping around the stage in ecstasy. When it was over, a smiling Bruce pumped his fist and shouted "Marah!" triumphantly, reaching out to shake each band member's hand before disappearing from whence he came.

Of course, now that everyone knew that he was in the building, the main floor became even more crowded in anticipation of what was sure to be a return appearance with his friend Joe Grushecky. But Bruce wasn't hiding backstage—he milled about in the crowd, standing by one of the side bars and engaging in conversation as he watched the first part of Grushecky's set.

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Joe G. re-teams with Bruce for latest LP

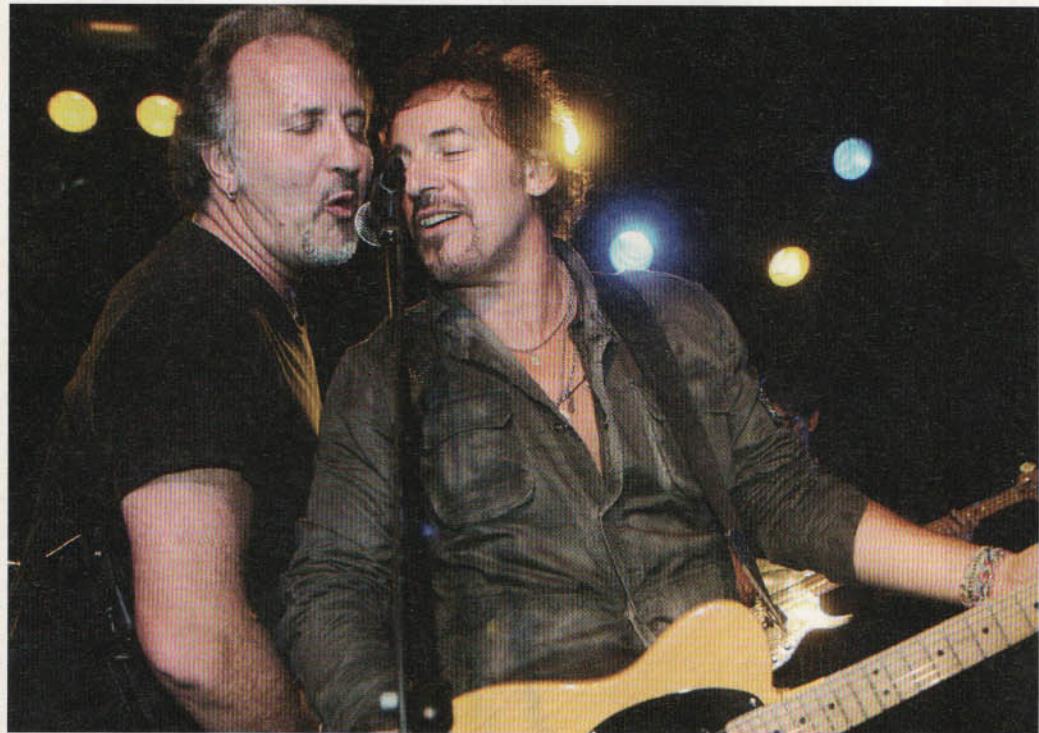
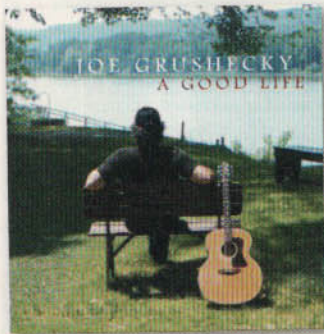
Life's Been Good

By Anthony D'Amato

On his latest album, Joe Grushecky sings about living a good life. Not the good life, mind you. Not the lap of luxury, special treatment everywhere you go, work when you feel like it kind of good life. That's not for him. Grushecky sings about the kind of good life where you've got a family you love, a day job where you make a difference in people's lives, and a night job where you get to play rock 'n' roll to your heart's content. Maybe fame and fortune have eluded this gritty Pittsburgh rocker, but happiness certainly hasn't.

While 2004's *True Companion* dealt with Grushecky's relationship with his late father, *A Good Life* finds things flipped around. Grushecky writes from the perspective of the father figure now, singing about growing older and his relationship with his own wife and kids. He still tips his cap to the sage wisdom of his father, though, who passed away shortly after *True Companion's* release: "Daddy always told me, money don't mean everything/Consider yourself a lucky man, you've got a guitar and you still can sing."

From "Safe at Home," a song about nervously awaiting a son's return, to "Don't Forget Where You're Coming From," a piece Grushecky wrote for his daughter, Desiree, it's clear that family is the songwriter's number-one priority. His 18-year-old son Johnny, who plays guitar in the Pittsburgh band A Fall From Grace, even joins Grushecky to



play on the record. And though many of the songs are deeply personal, Grushecky still manages to tap into universal themes and characters that can ring true with most any listener.

"They're all pretty close to home on this one—except for the one about me having an affair," Grushecky tells *Backstreets* with a laugh, referencing the track "Too Hot to Think."

The personal nature of the record led Grushecky to seek a more stripped-down sound, choosing to record the album without his traditional backing band, the Houserockers.

"Well, we had done *True Companion*, and that was pretty much a big Houserocker record," says Grushecky. "I felt I wrote *True Companion* for the Houserockers, and I just wanted to do something that was not as band-specific. I just wanted to do something on my own. That was really the emphasis behind it."

As a result, Grushecky adopted a more natural approach to his songwriting process for the album.

"I wrote very specifically for *True Companion*, for the Houserockers' strengths," he explains, "so I wrote the songs that I thought could fit our type of music, fit the players. There was a lot of harmonica on the last record because Marc [Reisman] was playing with us, and I just really tried to make that a Houserocker record. But this record [*A Good Life*], I just sort of let it go. However the songs came down and deposited themselves in my brain, that's the route I took."

The record opens with "Code of Silence," a blistering duet with Grushecky's longtime pal and supporter, Bruce Springsteen, who co-wrote the song and won a Grammy for his performance of it on 2003's *The Essential Bruce Springsteen*.

"We were just exchanging some ideas, looking to do some writing together," says Grushecky of working with Springsteen. The two had established a writing relationship during the recording of Grushecky's *American Babylon*, which Springsteen produced,

and when The Boss was looking to write some new rock songs, he came back to his Pittsburgh counterpart.

"He was going to record some stuff for the E Street Band," explains Grushecky. "He asked me if I had anything I thought he could use for rock songs, so we had some [writing] sessions."

In the end, the song was completed long-distance, with Grushecky faxing and mailing Springsteen bits and pieces of songs he had been working on.

"'Another Thin Line' and 'Code of Silence' both came out of the same batch of songs I sent him," says Grushecky. "'Code of Silence' was something I had written... [but] I wasn't crazy about the music."

Using Grushecky's chorus, Springsteen took the lyrics and ran with them, writing new chords and tweaking his verses here and there.

"It was something I wouldn't have put together on my own, and he wouldn't have on his own," explains Grushecky. "It was a real collaboration."

As Grushecky prepared to record *A Good Life*, though, he knew it was missing something important.

"I was getting down to finishing writing this record, and I didn't have any really big rock songs at that time," says Grushecky. "'Code of Silence,' Bruce does the live version, and I thought we could do a studio version that, to me, was a bit different. I asked Bruce if he would mind if I recorded that song, and he said... he thought it was a good idea. Once he gave me his blessing to record it, I said, 'Well, do you want to sing on it?'"

Springsteen took Grushecky up on his offer to record some guitar and vocals, also joining him on three other tracks on the album: "A Good Life," "Searching for My Soul," and "Is She the One."

"We have a lot of the same reference points," Grushecky explains of his close relationship with Springsteen. "Same age—I was basically doing the same type of music in Pittsburgh that he was doing here at the Jersey Shore when we were growing up together—same interests. It's one of those things where you hook up with somebody and you go down the line, 'Yeah, I read this book, I saw this movie, I play this song.' We just hit it off, and

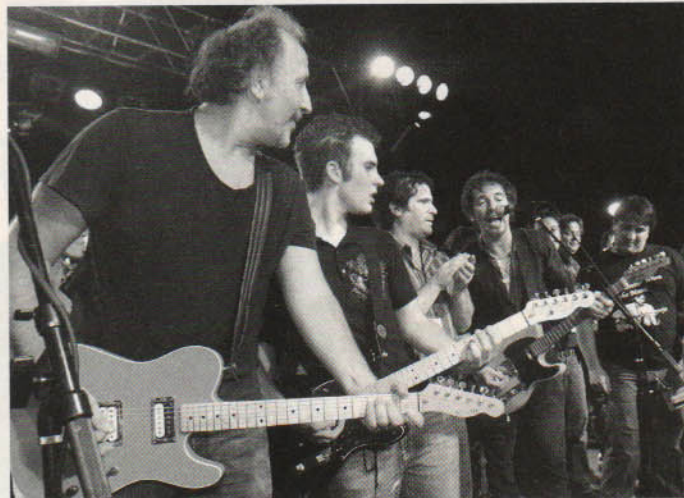
I think being close friends added to the working relationship."

"People ask me about playing with Bruce," he continues. "It's like playing baseball with Mickey Mantle, throwing the football with Terry Bradshaw, playing guitar with B.B. King, you know? He's just one of the greatest of all time. It's a pleasure and an honor to play with somebody that talented."

At the end of the day, Grushecky knows the new record won't be going gold or platinum. But for what it's worth, he knows in his heart that he's achieved the kind of success every artist wishes for, the kind you can't measure in albums sold or dollars earned.

"I don't know how many people have come up to me so far and said, 'This record has really touched me,'" relates Grushecky. "It's one of those records that seems just to resonate with people."

And so tomorrow will be just like any other day for Grushecky. In the morning, helping to mold some of Pittsburgh's toughest youths as a special educator; at night, jamming with some of Pittsburgh's finest musicians as a local rock icon; and at the end of the day, going home to a family as a loving father. A good life indeed. 🎸



MARK R. SULLIVAN PHOTO / MARKRSULLIVAN.COM

Continued from page 17

Grushecky and the House-rockers, joined by son Johnny, hit the stage around 1 a.m. and played for about an hour, mixing songs from his latest release, *A Good Life*, with older material. Finally, in keeping with the evening's soul music theme, the band kicked into the Apollo Theater's "Star Time" theme as Joe announced, "It's star time at the Starland Ballroom. I'd like to present to you New Jersey's favorite son, Bruce Springsteen!" And with that, back came Bruce, picking up a guitar and joining Joe at his center stage mic.

The pair performed what by now has become their standard set, interspersing Grushecky's "Talking to the King," and "Never Be Enough Time" with Springsteen originals like "Johnny 99" (and their co-written "Code of Silence"). Highlights were an intense "Darkness on the Edge of Town," and "Atlantic City," during which Bruce baited the folks in the front row by kneeling down and taking a solo just inches from the front of the stage. In keeping with the season, Springsteen concluded the set by inviting the evening's performers back onstage for an ensemble performance of "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" instead of the usual "Light of Day," Bob Benjamin joining him on lead vocals. Benjamin then spoke briefly, encouraging attendees not to give up the fight for a cure for Parkinson's before receiving a (by now traditional, this time belated) birthday cake as well as a salutation from the participants.

In addition to benefiting the Parkinson's Disease Foundation,

Light of Day 7 also raised money for Joan Dancy and P.A.L.S., a new Monmouth County charity organization working to help those with ALS.

With 2006 being the second straight year with European shows added to the goings-on, it is clear that the Light of Day benefit has gained a solid following both at home and abroad. With some time to heal and a little luck, Benjamin should be able to devote more energy to helping his event reach its full potential in 2007. Indeed, a more diverse lineup and more "big draw" performers are all that is preventing his brainchild from enjoying the national recognition it so richly deserves. 🎸

STAR TIME! Springsteen at LOD7

with Marah

- Raise Your Hand
- Reservation Girl

with Joe Grushecky

- Never Be Enough Time
- A Good Life
- Darkness on the Edge of Town
- Talking to the King
- Johnny 99
- Code of Silence
- Atlantic City

with all

- Santa Claus is Comin' to Town

December 2, 2006
Starland Ballroom
Sayreville, NJ



ANTHONY D'AMATO PHOTO

Tickle Me Boss

Bruce Lights Up P.A.L.S. Benefit

By John Schlicher

Springsteen fans haven't been getting any lately. By "any," in this case, we mean rock 'n' roll.

Yes, it's been quite a dry spell for you if you're partial to Mr. Springsteen's boot-stompin', guitar-wailing, fist-pumping-in-the-air performances. With Bruce shelving rock 'n' roll in favor of exploring first his solo-acoustic side with *Devils & Dust* and its ensuing tour, and then his "folk" side with the Seeger Sessions project and tour, fans have been patiently waiting for his return to the Fender Esquire and hopefully the E Street Band. For some fans, patience is wearing thin.

This would partially explain why, back in November when Bobby Bandiera announced an all-star holiday benefit concert for The Joan Dancy and People with ALS (P.A.L.S.) Support Group, fans immediately gobbled up every seat in the Count Basie Theater on the first day of sale—despite having no idea of who was going to perform. In fact, the only performers officially listed on the bill at the time, besides Bobby and his band, were "special guests."

Granted, it wasn't going too far out on a limb to think that one of those guests was more than likely going to be Bruce Springsteen. After all, Bruce has played with Bobby and his band many times in recent years, including previous holidays shows. Bruce had no holiday shows of his own on



Springsteen, Bonds, and Bon Jovi figure out who's been naughty and who's been nice.

the schedule for 2006. The show was in Red Bank, NJ, practically Springsteen's backyard. And lastly, it was, after all, a benefit show for a charity started by Bruce's long-time friend/bodyguard/personal assistant Terry Magovern—a local organization committed to improving the quality of life for ALS patients and their families—in honor of his late fiancée Joan Dancy.

But it wasn't a sure thing that Bruce would show. Apparently, just the slight chance that Bruce *could* show—and more importantly that he could play some rock 'n' roll—was all that rabid Springsteen fans needed to throw down major coin for a ticket, some for \$300. That's a pretty pricey gamble (well, maybe not for residents of Rumson).

Ticketholders waited for two weeks to see if their gamble would pay off—two weeks, three hours, and ten minutes, to be exact. That's because the first three hours and change of the The Bobby Bandiera All-Star Holiday Benefit Show on December 12 was, for better or

for worse, Bruce-free. For those who went to the show strictly in hopes of seeing Springsteen—granted, that wasn't everyone in the room, but judging by the vibe they formed a sizeable constituency—it was undoubtedly a little unsettling to see each hour pass without even a hint of whether the man made the drive over from Rumson. Usually, at shows like this, he's known to come out and guest with a performer or two before coming to play his own set. Not this night.

Tim McCloone and Holiday Express opened the show with a short, lighthearted set of mostly popular Christmas songs that put everyone in the holiday mood. Magovern then emerged from the shadows to take center stage and speak about the P.A.L.S. organization and its purpose. It was a bit unusual to hear Terry speak at length, as most fans are accustomed to seeing a quiet, stone-faced Terry at Bruce's side—a gruff enforcer role that he quickly reassumed after giving his touching speech to the packed theater. (He could be

seen the rest of the night directing security and patrolling the audience for people taking photographs.) The evening may have been to honor his late fiancée's spirit and memory, but for the no-nonsense Magovern it was apparently still a work night.

Next up was Mark Pender and LaBamba's band, rocking the house with a wild set that at one point had Mark and LaBamba leading all the horn players out into the audience and eventually up into the balcony. They were a great lead-in to the always-solid Bobby Bandiera and his band, who settled in as the house band for the rest of the night. Bobby and the boys took the stage at 9:15 and opened their set with group of Phil Spector songs wonderfully performed by a rotating ensemble of female vocalists. Southside Johnny made his first appearance of the evening for "Spanish Harlem" with Bobby and the gang, and Gary U.S. Bonds came out to perform the doo-wop classic "Pretty Little Angel Eyes," which energized the crowd. Finally, Bobby closed



his set with a dead-on version of Neil Young's "Like a Hurricane," which brought the crowd to its feet to greet it with a standing ovation.

Bonds re-emerged from backstage to work his way through his typical set of "New Orleans," "Can't Teach an Old Dog New Tricks," and "Quarter to Three." Southside reprised his role of guest performer, joining in on "Havin' a Party" which concluded Bonds' set. Next up, Southside came back for a third time with a set of his own, taking the stage to tear through "Talk to Me" followed by "It's Christmas Time, Baby." But the absence of Bruce on "Talk to Me"—a song which he and Southside almost always perform when they're on the same bill—seemed to drain energy from the crowd. Jon Bon Jovi appeared to duet with Southside on a spirited "I Don't Want to Go Home," and a high-octane "Trapped Again" featuring two original Asbury Jukes—Kevin Kavanaugh and "Mr. Popeye" (Kenny Pentifallo)—concluded Southside's set. Springsteen fans (most of whom seemingly aren't fans of Mr. Jovi) now faced a doubly sad realization: they might not see a set by Bruce, and they were more than likely going to have to sit through one by Jon Bon Jovi. But just as at his 2003 Hope Concert performance here at the Basie, Bon Jovi proved himself to be a class act with a knack for winning over a crowd.

Beginning his set, Jon addressed the crowd by saying, "It's nice to be here for Terry and Joan" and then appropriately acknowledged the architect of the evening: "Without Bobby Bandiera, nothing is possible for tonight. This is a true legend of the Jersey Shore." Jon's first three numbers were familiar Christmas songs, which went over well with the audience. He ended his set with the also very familiar "Who Says You Can't Go Home," which, due to being a country crossover hit as well as the jingle for the New Jersey state tourism board, is known by every man, woman and child residing in the Garden State. It brought everyone to their feet, dancing and clapping, and seemed to be a great opportunity for that other guy from Jersey to come out and play... but again, no Bruce.

As Jon walked off, the crew quickly ascended the stage just as they had done all night between performers, so it was obvious *something* was still to come. It was three hours of music up to this point—so more than likely, the next performance was probably going to be the last. But was it going to be Springsteen?

Scattered "Bruce-ing" throughout the theater that quickly grew in volume and intensity as a shadowy but familiar figure made his way to the center of the unlit stage answered that question. A particularly jubilant "Good evening, everybody!" sounded throughout the theater just before the spotlights hit and the first few notes of "Darlington County" creaked their way out of Bruce Springsteen's electric guitar. You could practically hear the collective sigh of relief from everyone who had waited for this moment, if it wasn't for the deafening—and I mean *deafening*—roar of the audience.

Granted, "Darlington County" isn't the strongest song in the Springsteen catalog, nor the most popular, but you would have never known it by the audience's reaction. You would have thought he was tearing into "Born to Run" backed by the E Street Band on that tiny Count Basie Theatre stage. With those opening notes the crowd literally rose as one, and just as the whole band kicked in, you could feel a palpable wave of energy take over the room.

Closing the night with what felt like a ridiculously short 35-minute set, Bruce simply stole the show. Backed by "Bobby Bandiera and his orchestra," as Bruce jokingly called them—the horn section now swelling with



Bruce and Jon Bon Jovi sit back right easy and laugh.

the addition of some Jukes to the lineup—Bruce steamrolled his way through a safe, six-song set. The horns added an interesting, almost "big band" feel to "Darlington County" and "Spirit in the Night," which followed, demonstrating once again that they should be part of the next E Street Band tour.

At this point the theater noticeably grew about ten degrees warmer, forcing Bruce to remove his sport coat to reveal a sweat-soaked grey henley—a sight that obviously delighted the screaming females in the crowd. "Seaside Bar Song" featured frenetic rhythm strumming by Bruce as he prowled every inch of the stage. "Waitin' on a Sunny Day" seemed even better than it did on the *Rising* tour (probably due to the addition of the horns here, too), and Bruce nicely dedicated the song to Terry and Joan. The highlight of his set, though, was undoubtedly "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" with guest Jon Bon Jovi. A noticeably slimmed-down Bruce wearing an odd, grey

"cab driver" hat danced goofily throughout the song—if you squinted your eyes (or had seats up in the balcony), it probably looked like 1975 all over again.

As expected, "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" ended his set and served as the show's grand finale. Bruce and Bobby and the band were joined by all the night's performers, plus Santa himself and a bizarre, acid-trippy collection of costumed characters including the Grinch, reindeer, and *Sesame Street*'s Elmo and Cookie Monster. When Southside Johnny eventually made his way onto the stage, Bruce proclaimed, "The Grinch is with us!"—which was all the funnier, considering someone in an actual Grinch costume was standing behind him.

Toward the end of the song, Jon teasingly asked Bruce, "Hey, Bruce—have you been good this year? Santa wants to know!" When Bruce answered "yes," Jon followed up: "Define good." And Bruce did, letting his music do the talking by delivering an impromptu guitar solo that said volumes more than any words ever could.

Four hours after it began, Bobby Bandiera's All-Star Holiday Benefit came to an end with what many hoped was the beginning of Bruce's return to rock 'n' roll. For those lucky attendees, the dry spell was over. Was it the best they ever had? Probably not. With a few months in the books since the afterglow wore off, I'd venture to say most would look back and remember that night as pretty darn good—probably not as great as they did the morning after, but pretty darn good. One thing I'm sure everyone can agree on: that next time, it lasts a little longer. 🍷

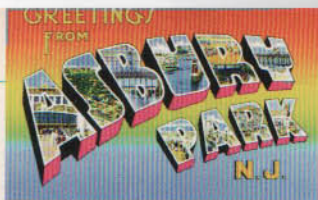


"You talkin' to me, Google-Eyes?"

December 12, 2006
Count Basie Theatre
Red Bank, NJ

- Darlington County
- Spirit in the Night
- Seaside Bar Song
- Waitin' on a Sunny Day
- Tenth Avenue Freeze-out*
- Santa Claus is Comin' to Town**

*with Jon Bon Jovi



Fables of the Reconstruction

Developmentally Challenged

By Lisa Iannucci

Convention Hall, home of many an intimate Springsteen concert over the past decade, is just one of many local landmarks in flux, as deterioration and revitalization proceed neck-and-neck in Asbury Park. A year ago, the venue hosted Bruce's Seeger Sessions kick-off, with a number of rehearsal shows and the *Good Morning America* broadcast. But local fans were disappointed when anticipated fall rehearsal shows did not materialize; Convention Hall was closed down for several months due to fire code violations. Springsteen was forced to return to the adjacent Paramount Theatre in mid-September to prepare for his second European visit with the Seeger material. The complex has since reopened and hosted a variety of events including the Garden State Film Festival.

With major development finally underway in Asbury Park in 2006, it seemed like changes have been taking place almost every day over the past year. First off, there was the implosion of the C-8 project on Ocean Avenue. The remains of the structure that for many had symbolized failed attempts at revitalization in the 1990s crumbled to the ground as local media proclaimed a bright future for the city, though some locals remained skeptical. The site is scheduled to house a high-rise complex, but as of early 2007 it had barely been cleared of debris. Meanwhile, the North Beach complex near the Berkeley Carteret Hotel is nearing completion, with some units reportedly occupied as of this spring. The Berkeley Carteret itself closed for business in late 2006 and was sold in early March of this year; the new owners plan to gut and then fully restore this remarkable landmark. Construction on the Wesley Grove project (site of the former Palace Amusements) dragged on through most of 2006; in 2007, though Phase I is

They've got guts: Casino renovation well underway, Memorial Day weekend, 2007.



near completion, it is showing little sign of being ready for (promised) spring occupancy.

On the boardwalk, the Casino, Convention Hall and the Fifth Avenue Pavilion (including the historic Howard Johnson's restaurant/bar) are all set to be renovated within the next two years under the auspices of owner/developer Asbury Partners. (Asbury Partners could not be reached for comment for this story.) All three sites continued to deteriorate throughout most of 2006, however, as the Partners failed to produce the restoration plans necessary for rehabilitation work to begin. As of early 2007, Convention Hall is virtually untouched aside from minor repairs. There has been some movement on the Pavilion: a contractor on board has tentative plans to bring in retail stores; the Howard Johnson's has been fully remodeled and will reopen as the Salt Water Café in late spring. And work finally began on the Casino late last year, as workers fenced off the building and began removing some of the copper trim above its windows in early November.

However, the real shock came when, without warning, the portion of the building that over-stretched the beach (which had formerly housed a skating rink) was unceremoniously torn down later that month; pieces of the demolished building were later sold in an online auction. Work continues on the site, and current development plans call for the restructuring and restoration of the outer core of the building to resemble its former self; the gutted and refurbished interior may host restaurants, retail and nightlife. Access to the Asbury Park boardwalk from the south is closed off indefinitely.

The fate of the Fourth Avenue complex, which houses the Baronet, the Fastlane, and Asbury Lanes, is still uncertain; though there is considerable citizen opposition to demolition of the historic structures, it appears likely that these venues will not survive. In mid-January 2007, both the Baronet and the Fastlane were sold to Asbury Partners, with the Lanes remaining in limbo.

Too bad, because this area has become a pretty cool entertain-

ment zone. The Baronet, the last surviving movie house in the city, reopened in late summer of 2006 and has been hosting theme movie nights and special events. The Fastlane, a once-thriving venue where Jon Bon Jovi got his start and where Bruce has jammed with national acts like the Stray Cats and David Johansen, has recently reopened and hosts live music several nights a week. Asbury Lanes, a combination music venue and bowling alley, continues to host garage, punk and rockabilly acts.

Other changes include the closing of both Crossroads (a blues bar on Main Street in Asbury that had been struggling with high rent and taxes for some time) and the Golddigger, a dive bar/hangout down the block from the Stone Pony. The Golddigger was demolished in late March, while Crossroads was sold and briefly reopened under another name, but closed again after the new owner reneged on the contract. Meanwhile, the Stone Pony and the Wonder Bar have remained open, but as they are in the path of redevelopment, they've been living on borrowed time. The

MIKE BLACK PHOTO

Wonder Bar was also sold to Asbury Partners in January 2007, and though its shutdown seemed imminent, it was granted a reprieve to remain open through the summer. Both venues continue to draw decent attendance, with the Wonder Bar's outdoor cafe being a particularly popular summer hangout spot along with its neighbor, the Tiki Bar (now Taffy's) on Convention Hall's south side.

Change continues on Cookman Avenue: Red Fusion, formerly Harry's Roadhouse, struggled throughout most of 2006, and closed for good in April 2007. Last summer, the venue hosted a strong series of acoustic shows celebrating local photographer John Cavanaugh's work. Its neighbor, Sonny's Southern Cuisine (site of one of Bruce's *Today Show* appearances) has been shuttered for some time but will reopen in late spring under the same ownership. Farther

down Cookman a handful new shops, restaurants and coffeehouses opened for business in 2006, and the transformation of the old Steinbach's building into condos continues. Two of the new establishments, Twisted Tree and Brickwall, host live acoustic music several nights a week.

The Deep continued to draw top punk bands to its boardwalk location just south of Madam Marie, though it closed for "overhaul" in late 2006 after an unfortunate incident involving patrons of a hardcore show; it is currently set to reopen as the Waterfront Kantina in late spring. Farther south, the Saint, one of the few venues unaffected by redevelopment plans, continues to thrive on Main Street, hosting a solid mix of local favorites like Divine Sign and Rick Barry and up-and-comers like The Shys. Finally, jazz aficionados celebrated the fall 2006 opening of the Joyful

Noyze Café on Asbury Avenue.

Other developments in Asbury Park included the debut of the Wave Gathering festival in May 2006, which featured local and national acts at a host of venues throughout the area, and the return in August of the Friends of Monmouth County Clearwater Festival. Both events were well attended, featuring performances by local and national acts including April Smith, The Smithereens, Boccigalupe & the Badboys, and North Jersey's maybe pete, who continue to draw attention with their Jersey Shore-meets-the-Ramones sound.

In artist news, John Eddie was set to head back into the studio in April to record the follow-up to 2003's *Who the Hell is John Eddie?*, while maybe pete began work on their second full-length release in early spring. Southside Johnny is also due to go back into the studio shortly with the Jukes, and a third solo release by Patti Scialfa is said to be in the works.

Perhaps the biggest musical success story on the Shore this year has been the rapid rise of Howell, NJ's own Status Green, who went from garage rehearsals in late 2005 to opening for Bon Jovi in February 2006. The quartet's energetic live show and solid roots-rock sound has garnered them a passionate area following, and their youngish fan base suggests that the Jersey Shore sound may have a whole new generation of devotees.

In November 2006, local music fans enjoyed the 14th Annual Asbury Music Awards, which honor local music in a variety of categories. The event, hosted by the Saint, features a strong lineup of local talent and has been held at the Stone Pony for the last few years. This year at the Saint, two E Street Band drummers were honored: Max Weinberg was honored with the 2006 Living Legend Award [see side-

bar], and Vini Lopez with the James MacDonald Lifetime Achievement Award.

Shortly thereafter, the founders of the local sound were honored with a permanent plaque on the boardwalk listing "The Creators of S.O.A.P." ("The Sound of Asbury Park") and a show at the Pony to celebrate. E Streeters Garry Tallent, David Sancious, and Vini Lopez all took part in the S.O.A.P. concert, joined by Billy Ryan, Nicky Addeo, Norman Seldin, Kenny "Popeye" Pentifallo, Lance Larson, and numerous other local legends.

Lastly, early 2007 saw the deaths of key Asbury figures Bill Chinnock and Big Danny Gallagher. The death of local legend Gallagher in January prompted a tribute concert at Red Fusion which was attended by many family members as well as more than a

few familiar faces from the Shore music scene. Gallagher, who was mysteriously omitted as a S.O.A.P. honoree in December, will be added to the commemorative plaque later this year. Meanwhile, Chinnock, who participated in several bands with future E Streeters Dan Federici, Lopez, Sancious and Tallent, took his own life after a long struggle with Lyme disease and its effects; a tribute concert was still in the works at press time. ➔

TO THE MAX!

"Living Legend" Weinberg accepts Asbury Music Award

I'm terribly sorry I can't be with you all tonight to accept this award in person. In the tradition of all great music produced by Monmouth County musicians, I'm in the studio with my son Jay's band, Golden Blood. Jay is 16 and a fine drummer already on his way to taking over the family business. So, if you see them playing at the Saint or in the area, check 'em out!

I'm truly honored to receive this award tonight and, if you'll allow me the privilege, I'd like to accept it in the names of all the musicians, past and present, who have lugged their gear around to perform for you. I first played Asbury in 1966 at the old Mrs. Jay's when the entrance was on 2nd Avenue. It was a big deal then—and it still is.

I have been exceedingly fortunate to have had a career that has exhibited a bit of longevity. In that regard I'd like to thank my wife, Becky, and my children, Ali and Jay, for their loving support through the ups and the downs. I'd also like to thank all the Asbury musicians I've had the pleasure of playing with through the years: My bandmates in Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, Southside and the Jukes, Bobby Bandiera, La Bamba, Mark Pender and everyone in the Max Weinberg 7 from *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, and the literally hundreds of players kind enough to let me sit in over the past 35 years or so. Thanks also to Butch and Jack, and later, Domenic of the Stone Pony, and the current owners, for struggling to keep presenting live music in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

I must also mention a gentleman most of you probably have not heard of, but he created the presentation of rock 'n' roll in Asbury during the '60s: the late Moe Septee. I never met the man, but if you mention his name to any member of my generation who grew up going to shows at Convention Hall, his name is instantly recognizable as the man who brought us the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Who, and hundreds of other groundbreaking bands from the golden age of rock 'n' roll.

Finally, I'd like to thank the good people of the Asbury Park Music Awards for bestowing upon me this great honor.

As Bruce says, "See ya up the road!"



Garry Tallent speaks at the S.O.A.P. monument dedication.

Meet you at the Cadillac Ranch

Three Shore Musicians Pass On

By Robert Santelli

Writing obituaries is usually the stuff of cub reporters, because it isn't difficult writing. You summarize a person's life and announce the cause of death and the surviving family. You don't have an emotional connection to the deceased; therefore it's simple to lay out the facts and move on. Many writers learn how to write clear, simple sentences by composing obituaries.

All that goes out the window when the assignment is to write about someone dear to you. Then the task of writing an obituary becomes a damn near impossible challenge. I've written such before. My father's obituary was the most difficult, for obvious reasons. But here in this issue of *Backstreets* I was challenged to write not one, but three obituaries of music friends from the Jersey Shore. Two of deaths were suicides. That ups the ante even more.

Bill Chinnock, Big Danny Gallagher, and Bobby Alfano were friends of mine. The first two I knew well from all the way back in the early '70s. Alfano I met later, during my stint as the *Asbury Park Press's* music critic. In their own way, all three played significant roles in the Jersey Shore music scene. Their passing saddens me and, I'm sure, everyone else who knew them. Not surprisingly, their musical talent was just a part of who they were and what made them special. I hope I captured a little bit of their soul in the words below.

Big Danny Gallagher 1948 - 2007

When Big Danny Gallagher passed away on January 25 of heart failure in Nederland, Colorado at age 59, the Jersey Shore lost one of its longtime musicians and most colorful personalities. A mountain of a man who registered six feet, five inches and nearly four hun-

dred pounds on any scale strong enough to hold him, "big" was an apt nickname. The fact that Gallagher also had a big heart, a big sense of humor, and a big love of life and music only embellished his over-sized physical frame. That he hadn't been a full-time resident of the area or a permanent member of any local band at the time of his death didn't matter. Big Danny's spiritual and musical home was and would always be the Jersey Shore.



Big Danny at the 1994 Clearwater Festival.

In the past few years Gallagher had spent considerable time in Ireland, where he quickly became one of the most popular buskers in Dublin. He also played in a few Irish pub bands, fitting right in with his flowing red hair and beard and his knowledge of the finest and funniest Irish drinking songs. More recently, he'd been staying with friends and family in various parts of the U.S. But whenever he showed up at the Shore, it was like he'd never left. "Big Danny's back in town," someone would say. And it wouldn't be long before he'd appear at a local bar or club, telling stories about his travels and trading songs with whomever might be onstage that night.

I first saw Big Danny onstage in 1971 as a member of Bruce Springsteen's short-lived, though wildly crazy band, Dr. Zoom and the Sonic Boom. Springsteen had created Dr. Zoom as the fabled

Steel Mill was folding and the Bruce Springsteen Band was forming. Gallagher didn't play any instrument in Dr. Zoom. But he still was center stage. Along with a few other local rogues, Gallagher played Monopoly, while nearby, a baton twirler did her thing and the band, made up of whomever happened to show up for the gig, turned out a fortified sound that landed somewhere between Joe Cocker's *Mad Dogs & Englishmen* and Frank Zappa's *Mothers of Invention*.

Gallagher's connection to Springsteen wasn't just through Dr. Zoom. Earlier, when Gallagher had been making a living as an ironworker and had just gotten into music, thanks, in part, to hanging out at the legendary after-hours Asbury Park club, the Upstage, he gave Springsteen a place to sleep after he'd been evicted from his apartment. As Springsteen said more than once, "I was down on my luck with no place to go and was just walking around, just trying to figure what to do. And I go past this place on Webb Street in Asbury Park and there's this big red-haired dude sitting on the porch. We talked a little bit and I said that I was a musician with no place to live, and he looked at me and said, 'Well you can live here.' And that's what I did."

Big Danny began singing and playing guitar and dobro full-time after a back injury ended his ironworking days. Mostly, he'd jam with friends like drummer Vini "Mad Dog" Lopez, whom he had known from their Upstage days. Blues was what he did best, and eventually he formed his own group, Big Danny and the Boppers, which led to Big Danny & the Lost Leader Band.

Gallagher never harbored deep musical aspirations. In a *Backstreets* interview I did with him years ago, he said bluntly, "I wasn't no great musician." But he didn't have to be. The best musicians at the Shore were happy to sit in with him. As a singer, he knew how to belt out the blues

without imitating the music's masters or reaching beyond his limits. But the biggest talent he brought with him up onstage was his personality. The jokes, the sideways chatter, the stories, and the warm Irish affection for the music that he sang were the things that mattered most.

In February, after his passing, friends of Big Danny Gallagher gathered in Asbury Park and celebrated his life and love of music with a night of remembrances and songs that were most dear to his heart. Gallagher's legacy will live on. He was just too big of a man for it not to.

Bill Chinnock 1948 - 2007

Bill Chinnock, 59, one of the pioneering musicians of the Jersey Shore music scene, took his own life on March 8, 2007 in his Yarmouth, Maine home. A longtime sufferer of Lyme Disease, Chinnock's health had so deteriorated in the last few years that it all but ended his recording and performing career and created deep-seated bouts of depression.

Although he had recorded more than a dozen albums and was considered a dynamic performer, Chinnock's career was marred by bad timing and business decisions and a restlessness that resulted in checkered recordings and inconsistent productions. Yet, underneath the ups and downs, there existed a genuine love of American music and a dogged determination to explore as many genres as possible.

Chinnock was born in Newark, NJ. One of his early bands, the Storytellers, included future E Street Band keyboards player Danny Federici. Armed with endless energy and supportive parents, Chinnock's early bands performed in New Jersey and New York City clubs in the mid-'60s. They split their sets with R&B standards and original songs, almost all of which were penned and arranged by Chinnock.

Bill Chinnock, circa 1982.



By the mid-'60s, Chinnock and Federici had re-located from northern New Jersey to the Jersey Shore and formed the Downtown Tangiers Rocking Rhythm & Blues Band, which included such other future E Street Band members as drummer Vini "Mad Dog" Lopez, bass player Garry Tallent, and pianist/guitarist David Sancious. One of the first Shore bands to tour outside the area, Downtown Tangiers featured Chinnock's emerging Ray Charles-like R&B vocals and a his broad sweep of blues-based guitar solos. However, once the after-hours Asbury Park club, the Upstage, opened in the late '60s, Downtown Tangiers disintegrated amid the exciting jamming going on there and the endless prospect of playing with new musicians, including a rising guitar player and singer from nearby Freehold, Bruce Springsteen.

Bands often formed and broke up in Asbury Park in the late '60s before building a track record, and Chinnock's post-Downtown Tangiers groups were no exception. By this time, though, Chinnock had become increasingly fascinated with traditional blues. Abandoning the idea of leading a big R&B-laced rock band, Chinnock moved from the Jersey Shore in the early '70s and settled in rural Maine where he believed he could study the blues without the musical distractions that swirled around Asbury Park.

In the 1970s Chinnock produced a couple of minor albums, including *Alive at the Loft* that illustrated his growing blues pedigree. Despite his critical success with the blues, Chinnock couldn't keep his longtime love of R&B in check. By the end of the decade, he had signed a recording contract with Atlantic Records

and released *Badlands*, the album considered to be the best of his career. *Badlands* was a brilliant forge of Jersey Shore-styled horns, driving rhythm & blues, hard rock, and superior vocals and songwriting. However, with Springsteen's E Street Band and Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes having already explored such musical territories, Chinnock's *Badlands* was overshadowed. The fact that he called the album *Badlands*, which also was the title of the first single from Springsteen's latest album, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, did not help matters.

Chinnock followed *Badlands* with another worthy album, *Dime Store Heroes*, that continued his exploration of rhythm & blues and American romanticism. Unfortunately, that album also failed to garner much attention outside Chinnock's core fans. Whether frustrated by his lack of commercial success or a victim of his unbridled need to search for new musical avenues, Chinnock spent the rest of his career moving from genre to genre. A move to Nashville resulted in a couple of lackluster country and pop albums. A return to the Jersey Shore was supposed to re-ignite his R&B connections, but little resulted from his coming home.

Chinnock did, however, win a 1987 Emmy for "Somewhere in the Night," used as a theme song in the soap opera, *The Edge of Night*. Another pair of albums—*Livin' in the Promised Land* and *Out on the Borderline*—failed to catch on, and Chinnock returned to Maine, not sure where else to turn, musically or residentially.

Chinnock opened a recording studio and continued to write and perform on occasion. Despite the irregularity of his shows, his

performances, especially on the Jersey Shore, were almost always climatic affairs, with Chinnock and his band bringing to life in fervid fashion songs from *Badlands* and *Dime Store Heroes*. But the touring grew even less frequent after Chinnock became afflicted with Lyme Disease, which robbed him of his health and energy and made him more reclusive than ever. At the time of his death, Chinnock had returned to the blues and was working on another album that was slated for release later this year.

Following on the heels of the sudden passing of Big Danny Gallagher, Chinnock's death was a shock to the Jersey Shore and Maine music scenes. Chinnock had kept his battle with Lyme Disease largely a secret, and when he did appear in public, he masked the physical and emotional pain he suffered. Not having lived on the Jersey Shore for many years didn't dilute his long-time relationship with the area or his many musician friends there. "He was one of us," Lopez recalled. "He was always someone who returned to the clubs here and played them as if he'd never left."

Bill Chinnock's career might be described as a promise unfulfilled. Blessed with talent and a deep understanding of American music, Chinnock never could put the right song on the right album and release it at the right time in the right place. Still, his place in the history of the Jersey Shore music scene is assured, and like, Big Danny, his music and memory live on.

Bobby Alfano 1950 - 2007

Bobby Alfano, once a member of Bruce Springsteen's earliest band, the Castiles, committed suicide on May 8. Suffering from depression and inner grief, Alfano jumped off the Raritan Bridge in New Jersey. He was 57 years old and lived in Wall Township.

Alfano, a keyboards player, began his career as a musician in the Freehold area in the mid-'60s. One of the earliest bands he played in, the Rising Sons, occasionally shared the stage with

Freehold's most popular band, the Castiles, which featured a young Springsteen on guitar and vocals. In 1967, Alfano was invited to join the Castiles, which sought to broaden its sound by adding keyboards. Alfano's presence in the Castiles was significant. In addition to giving the band the swirling, psychedelic organ sound it wanted, Alfano also contributed to the Castiles' original music repertoire. He and Springsteen collaborated on a song, "Mr. Jones," that became one of the Castiles' more requested original pieces.

After the breakup of the Castiles in 1968, Alfano and others formed Sunny Jim, a band that quickly became one of the most popular bands on the Jersey Shore in the late '60s, playing gigs at Monmouth College, Ocean County College, and other large venues. After the Castiles, Springsteen formed the group Earth, and Alfano played in it as well. However, with Springsteen's growing desire to explore the potential of a power trio (guitar/bass/drums), Alfano's tenure in Earth was short-lived.

Though the Jersey Shore music scene was always known more for its guitar players and drummers, Alfano ranks with the best rock organ players of the region. He not only brought a keen understanding of the keyboards to the bands he played in, but he also contributed a broad landscape of tones and textures that made groups like the Castiles and Sunny Jim sound far more interesting and contemporary.

Like so many other Jersey Shore musicians whose commitment to the music was strong, but the pull of personal commitments in the form of marriage and career a little bit stronger, Alfano slid in and out of the area's music scene in the '70s and beyond. Alfano enjoyed his biggest comeback with the Disco Rejects, a popular Shore bar band that included former E Street Band drummer, Vini Lopez. ➤





Incident on

An evening entitled "A Tribute to Bruce Springsteen" conjures up nightmare thoughts of bad cover bands, featuring a *Born in the U.S.A.*-era "Springsteen," complete with headband, regaling a Saturday night crowd with overly earnest versions of "Glory Days." Move the venue to Carnegie Hall, and provide an eclectic and absurdly talented lineup of contributors—some of the above still rings true, but for the most part, the diverse artists involved brought a different playbook.

Where else would you get a semi-obscure local Brooklyn band, Elysian Fields, who have worked with names such as Steve

Albini, John Zorn, and Hal Willner, who are conversant enough with the oeuvre to pull off a powerful and brooding version of "Streets of Fire" and also strong enough to act as the backing band all night? Where else does the Hold Steady come onstage and abandon all semblance of cool (from one perspective) by cranking out a version of "Atlantic City" true to the original and yet authentically branded as their own? Where else could Badly Drawn Boy and Josh Ritter live out their *Live/1975-85* fantasies? Even Jon Landau admitted to *Backstreets* at the pre-show reception that he had his own picks in mind: "All I'm Thinkin' About" ("If I could sing," he said)

and "Streets of Fire" ("if I could play guitar"). It was the biggest and loudest Bruce Springsteen geek convention ever. Pop artists attempted to channel some degree of cool, while the already-hip affirmed their place and simultaneously abandoned it as they embraced the spirit of the evening wholeheartedly.

Produced by Michael Dorf, the same man behind a well-received "Tribute to Bob Dylan" five months earlier, this evening was designed in the same fashion: 20 artists, each performing one Springsteen song on stage at Carnegie Hall. Proceeds from the event would benefit the UJA Federation of New York's Music for Youth Initiative,

51th Street



HOW DO YOU GET TO CARNEGIE HALL? PRACTICE, SURE. BUT HAVING FOUR DECADES' WORTH OF MATERIAL FOR FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS TO PLAY IN TRIBUTE CAN'T HURT.

which supports music education programs for underprivileged young people. One such beneficiary, The Young People's Chorus of New York City, joined the Holmes Brothers to provide backing vocals for "My City of Ruins."

While some scheduled acts seemed obvious—Steve Earle, Badly Drawn Boy, Pete Dinklage, Mariah—others were incomprehensible, at least on the surface. With the lineup evolving week-to-week and then day-to-day as the night of the show drew near, it was hard to know what to expect in advance. No longer on the bill by showtime were Bruce Hornsby, Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds, and Jewel.

BY GLENN RADECKI & CARYN ROSE PHOTOGRAPHS BY A.M. SADDLER

The show opened with Earle, noted Springsteen fan ("I've never missed a tour"), performing a straightforward, solo-acoustic version of "Nebraska." Speaking with *Backstreets* before the show, Earle fondly recalled his first Springsteen show in Houston in 1975 and expressed great excitement at being able to participate this evening.

Brooklyn-via-Philly favorites Mariah may be best known to Bruce fans for their guest

appearance at Giants Stadium in 2003, and the Light of Day benefit in December 2006 brought them together with Springsteen again. Their faithful but transformed version of "The Rising" came several songs into the program, with Mariah ably accomplishing one thing Bruce himself couldn't: incorporating bagpipes into a live show! Their song choice was also notable, as Mariah was one of only two artists to choose a Springsteen song from the last ten years.



PATTI SMITH



JULIANA HATFIELD



STEVE EARLE



ODETTA

South Jersey girl Patti Smith's presence was a late addition to the lineup, and while obvious, was still welcome to say the least. Her introduction of "Because the Night" was touching and heartfelt, as she recalled how a "Jersey boy" gave her a song in 1978 that was a "helping hand," finishing by saying that "this Jersey girl thanks that Jersey boy." The riveting performance, with Patti backed only by piano, garnered the first standing ovation of the evening.

Pete Yorn, also a native New Jerseyian and well-known for his Springsteen fanboy tendencies, chose to perform Springsteen's biggest hit. Yorn spoke to *Backstreets* before the show, explaining that he had thought about doing other songs, but that "Dancing in the Dark" was "a song that I'm really feeling right now." The lyrics, he noted, "have a really dark element to them," which he emphasized in his solo-acoustic performance. Without either the dance or rock beats most often paired with the song, Yorn's take was a reminder that Springsteen's biggest hits could contain some of his bleakest lyrics.

This point was further emphasized by Joseph Arthur's outstanding reading of "Born in the U.S.A.," a song that Springsteen has reworked perhaps more times than any other in his canon. Arthur's innovative performance borrowed the best elements from the various arrangements: the over-the-top, almost-screaming vocals of the album cut, the sparse and angry acoustic guitar from the *Tracks* version, with the chiming piano riff added on top for good measure. Performed with full theatrics, including outstretched arms on the chorus, Arthur's performance was masterful. It was dedicated, in true Bruce fashion, to military personnel serving overseas.

Some of the most exciting—perhaps to some, the most disconcerting—performances of the evening were from those who chose to rework their song into a completely new arrangement. Uri Caine, an accomplished jazz pianist, provided an instrumental version of "New York City Serenade," an appropriate choice. Indie-rock darling Juliana Hatfield's dark, soulful, solo-electric "Cover Me" was markedly less obvious, but it was one of the evening's standouts. Her performance called to mind Springsteen's performance of "Dancing in the Dark" in 1992, in which he used a solo-electric version as a reclamation of the song from its pop origins; Hatfield accomplished similar results. The Low Stars, a rising "New Country" act, were one of few sour notes on the bill. Their overly polished four-part harmony on "One Step Up" was jarring, unenthusiastic, and seemed out of place given its lyrics.

The most original rearrangement of the night was the penultimate tribute performance, courtesy of '60s folk legend Odetta. It took her quite some time to select a song, she told the crowd, because of the extensive nature of "Mr. Springsteen's" repertoire. The care she took paid off, as this 77-year-old clearly outperformed everyone else on that stage that night. Accompanied by piano, Odetta sat center stage in her wheelchair, offering a dramatic reading of "57 Channels (And Nothin' On)." Her performance of this unexpected song choice was equal parts funny, dramatic, and ironic, culminating in the line that rang through the hall: "And in the blessed name of Elvis, well, I just let it blast." Springsteen himself would remark later in the evening that Odetta had turned in "the greatest version of '57 Channels' ever."

MARAH TAKES ON "THE RISING"...
AND MAKES THE BAGPIPES WORK!



Bruce Springsteen

Thursday, April 5 at Carnegie Hall

produced by Michael Dorf

A benefit for Music for Youth - UJA-Federation of New York's initiative to support music education for underprivileged young people.

All artists each performing one Bruce song, including:

Jewel - Steve Earle - M. Ward - Pete Yorn
Jesse Malin & Ronnie Spector - Odetta
North Mississippi All-Stars - Bacon Brothers
Badly Drawn Boy - Marah - Joseph Arthur
Josh Ritter - Juliana Hatfield - Elysian Fields
Holmes Brothers w/ Young People's Chorus
Jersey Boys w/ Bobby Valli - Low Stars
Robin Holcomb - Uri Caine

Join us for this historic evening!

Tickets: www.springsteen.org or 212-200-1800

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NEBRASKA

Steve Earle

STREETS OF PHILADELPHIA

The Bacon Brothers

STREETS OF FIRE

Elysian Fields

THE RIVER

Josh Ritter

BECAUSE THE NIGHT

Patti Smith

THE RISING

Marah

MY CITY OF RUINS

Holmes Brothers with the Young People's

Chorus of New York City

BRILLIANT DISGUISE

Robin Holcomb

JERSEY GIRL

Jersey Guys with Bobby Valli

SPIRIT IN THE NIGHT

North Mississippi All-Stars

NEW YORK CITY SERENADE

Uri Caine

COVER ME

Juliana Hatfield

ONE STEP UP

Low Stars

THUNDER ROAD

Badly Drawn Boy

BORN IN THE U.S.A.

Joseph Arthur

DANCING IN THE DARK

Pete Yorn

HUNGRY HEART

Jesse Malin with Ronnie Spector

I'M GOIN' DOWN

M. Ward

57 CHANNELS

Odetta

ATLANTIC CITY

The Hold Steady

THE PROMISED LAND

Bruce Springsteen

ROSALITA

Bruce Springsteen

ROSALITA

Bruce Springsteen with All



Average performances this night were few and far between, save perhaps a proficient-if-flat version of "Streets of Philadelphia" by the Bacon Brothers (accompanied by Charlie Giordano of the Seeger Sessions Band). The many highlights, however, made the evening's flops stick out all that much more. Communication appeared to be the culprit with M. Ward's version of "I'm Goin' Down": house band Elysian Fields was playing a subdued version of the album arrangement; M. Ward was not, and neither seemed able to figure out where each was going next. A group of singers calling themselves "The Jersey Guys"—whose biggest claim to fame appeared to be either that they had Frankie Valli's brother as a member or that they brought a minor member of the *Sopranos* cast onstage to lean against the piano and do nothing else—somehow found their way onto the program only to butcher "Jersey Girl," a song written not by Bruce Springsteen but by Tom Waits.

The biggest disappointment of the night was, regrettably, one of the most highly-anticipated ones: the performance of "Hungry Heart" by Jesse Malin and Ronnie Spector. Malin has covered the song many times before (always dedicated to

Joey Ramone), and he and his band turned in a fine performance. Spector, however, revealed herself to be in no shape to perform publicly—an unfortunate postscript to her Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction only weeks earlier.

A more compelling moment came courtesy of up-and-comer Josh Ritter, whose take on "The River" featured an extra twist. Ritter began a solo-acoustic performance but opted not to start the first verse immediately; rather, he began talking to the crowd over a soft, repeating acoustic guitar figure, telling a story about finding the music of Springsteen while growing up in rural Idaho. As he continued, it became clear that Ritter was not only letting the crowd in on something personal, he was deliberately evoking the famous performance of "The River" found on the *Live/1975-85* box set. As he finished, he indeed recalled listening to it on cassette in his bedroom as a teenager. All that was missing was "and he said, 'that's good'" from the end. The attention to detail in recapturing the moment as tribute was remarkable.

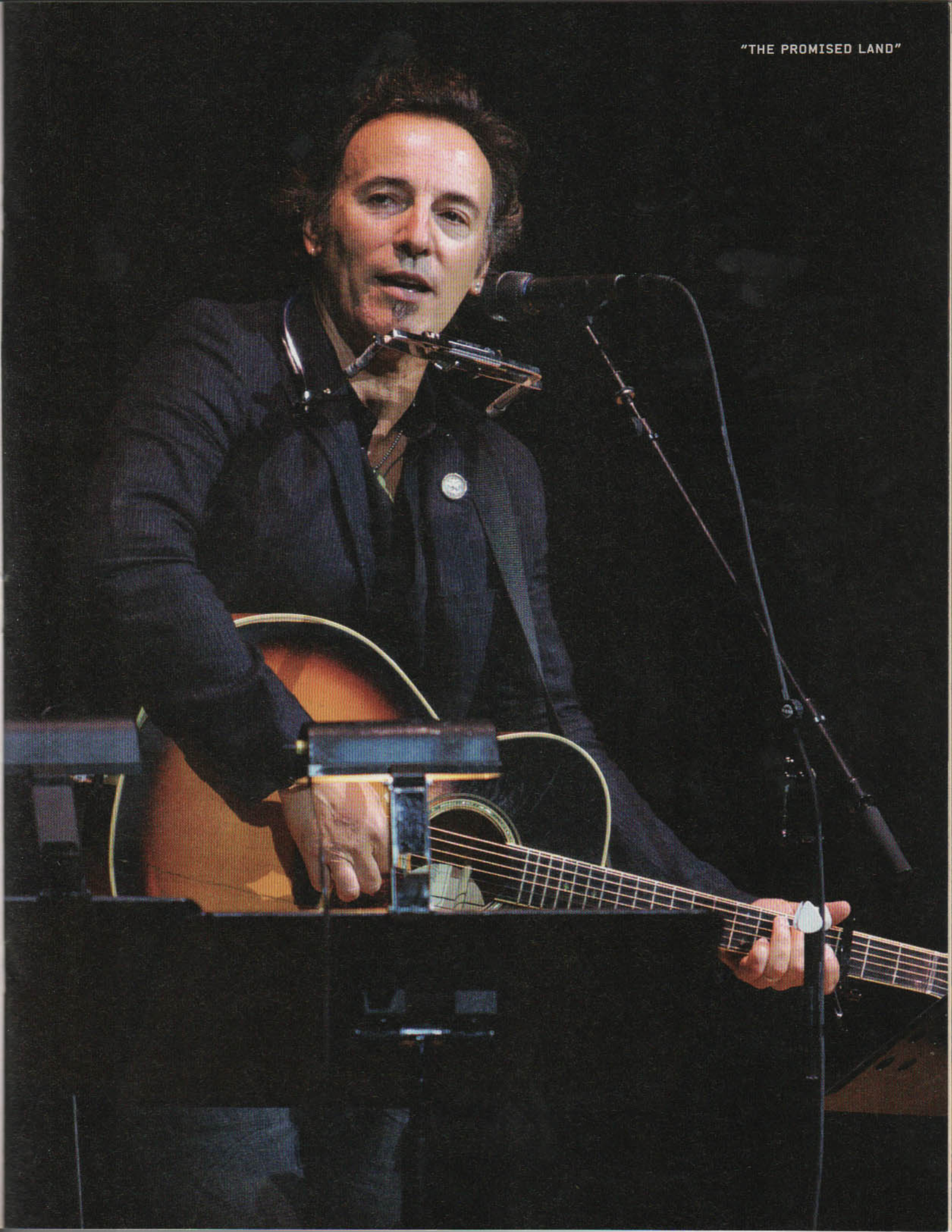
Damon Gough, also known as Badly Drawn Boy, is probably the most unlikely super-fan you could imagine. Gough, who hails from the north of England, is a

proudly self-identified Springsteen fanatic. Nerves were evident as he walked out onto the stage ("I'm scared to death and thrilled at the same time," he admitted), and when it was obvious that he wasn't going to be performing a standard, clichéd acoustic version of "Thunder Road" but was going to throw himself into a full-blown electric rendition, there was some skepticism expressed from the audience—and rightly so. By the end of the song, however, there were no skeptics left, and he received a well-earned standing ovation.

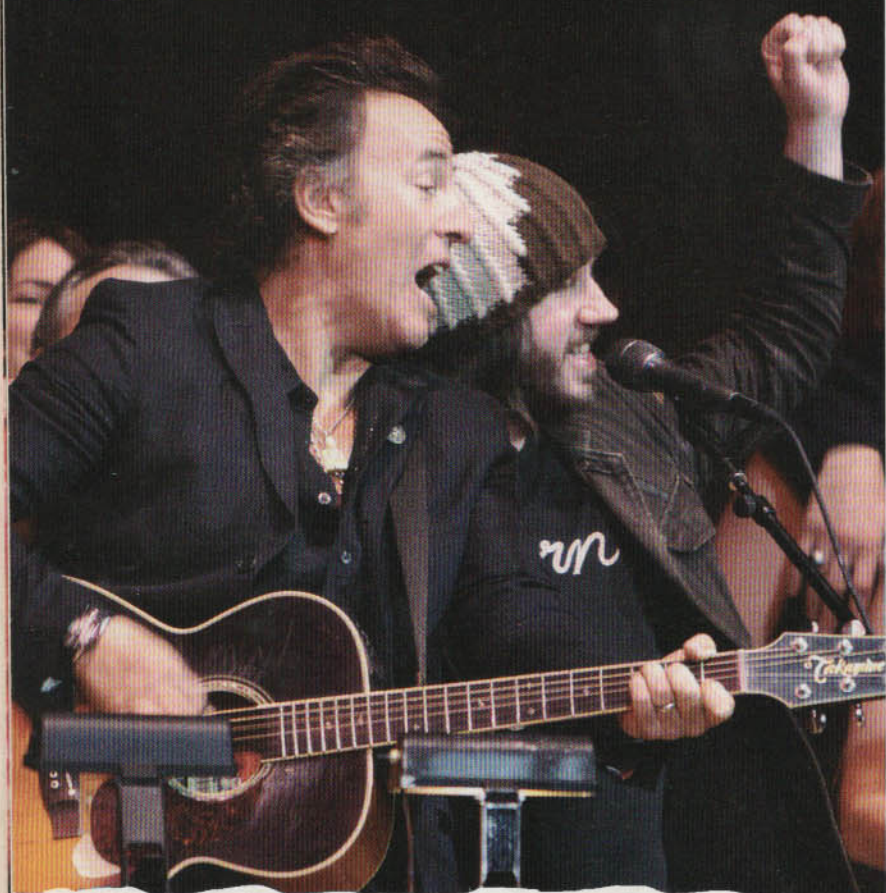
The Hold Steady's presence on the bill could have sold out Carnegie Hall instantly; this is likely why they were a late addition to the lineup. Many writers have compared the Hold Steady to Springsteen, likely due to the strong story arc in many of their songs, and some of the cadences of frontman Craig Finn's vocals are vaguely reminiscent of *Greetings*-era Bruce. They played electric with their full lineup, and their version of "Atlantic City" was energetic and filled the room.

Throughout the evening, WFUV's Rita Houston introduced each performer. It was seemingly a good idea, given that many in the crowd were likely unfamiliar with several of the artists performing. The announcer,

"THE PROMISED LAND"



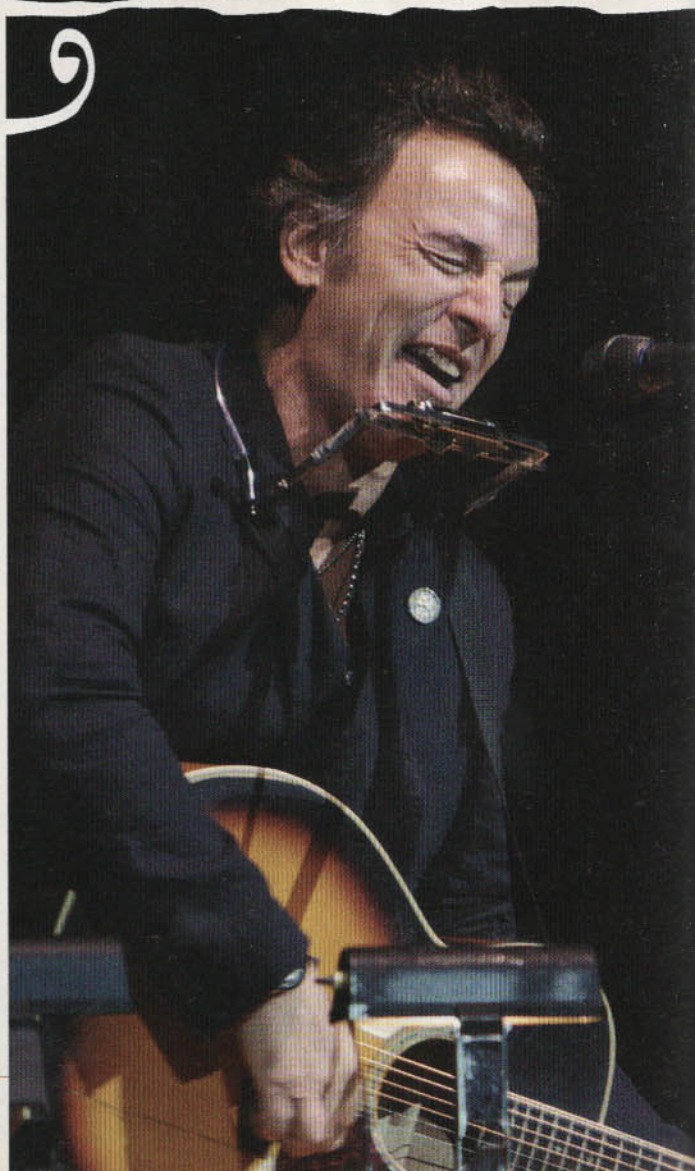
THEY'RE ONLY HERE FOR FUN:
"ROSALITA" VOLUNTEERS
DAMON GOUGH...



...JESSE MALIN...



...AND CRAIG FINN





unfortunately, didn't limit her introductions to a short background of the each artist and instead revealed what song would be next as well. She did not have the chance, however, to ruin the surprise after the Hold Steady finished. When Kevin Buell walked out with an acoustic guitar in hand, any suspicions or hopes from those in the crowd were immediately confirmed. Bruce strolled out shortly thereafter, slightly bemused at the tributes, and reminding everyone that "I'm still alive!"

"The Promised Land," an unsurprising choice, was performed in a slightly different fashion than had been done in recent years. Springsteen kept the song's familiar harmonica parts, but he was clearly not giving up on the vocal phrasing he had adopted on his two acoustic tours. The pairing of the two contrasting arrangements seemed forced and the performance suffered for it, although few in the crowd seemed to notice or care, as the surprise of the appearance itself appeased most.

Springsteen's second performance, however, was a shock: the first acoustic "Rosalita" in many years. The crowd sang and clapped earnestly through each verse, until Bruce abruptly stopped. At first it seemed that he decided to bring the song to a premature end—or perhaps that the teleprompter broke—as he jokingly said, "well, it's getting late, and I've run out of lyrics!" He continued, though, with one of his funnier monologues in recent years.

"Well, you all know how it ends," Springsteen told the crowd. "Rosie went off with our hero and got married." He proceeded to tell about how "our hero" wound up in "one or two tabloid stories," that "he broke up his band... wrote songs about being happy, which nobody liked," "some babies came along," how "his hair got a little gray, when he wasn't touching it up," all to much laughter.

Bruce wound up the performance as most of the performers from earlier in the evening came out for the inevitable grand

finale jam. There seemed to be some discussion onstage as to which song Bruce had in mind; it's unclear whether "Rosalita" was planned for the sing-along or if Bruce had hijacked it into his set at the last minute. Elysian Fields got word to Bruce that they knew how to play "Rosalita," and Bruce delightfully acquiesced.

"Volunteers?" Bruce growled. Craig Finn put his hand up first; Damon Gough stepped forward second, with Jesse Malin as the last victim. As might have been expected, the song was loose and sloppy and chaotic, with every artist onstage that night angling for their moment to stand next to Bruce and sing—and who wouldn't do the same if they had the chance? Dave Petersen, who plays drums for Mariah, even brought his infant daughter Maybelline onstage for a few moments to join in. Bruce happily accommodated all comers, and the result was raucous and joyous and absolutely reflected the underlying spirit of the evening. 🐾

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In late 1997, Bruce Springsteen agreed to record a song for a Pete Seeger tribute album on Appleseed Recordings, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*. At the end of October, Jim Musselman, the activist lawyer who founded Appleseed, sent Bruce a tape with 14 songs on it, including "We Shall Overcome" [see sidebar for full list]. Musselman explained to *Backstreets* that he sent along a note regarding "We Shall Overcome," about how Pete felt that the sign of a good song is how adaptable it is to different situations. He added that if Bruce didn't find Pete's songs appealing, he could maybe just have fun with a folk song or two.

According to Bruce, "I listened to a lot of his music and picked out a bunch of things that I thought I could sing and would sound right interpreting" for the tribute album. At that time, he was not actively recording with the E Street Band. He had recently finished touring behind *The Ghost of Tom Joad* and was working on a new batch of songs for a possible follow-up to that album.

A few months prior, during the late summer of 1997, Springsteen had a "fiesta in the field" at his farmhouse. Soozie Tyrell recommended The Gotham Playboys, a five-piece band with whom she frequently played, to perform. Sam Bardfeld recalls that first encounter to *Backstreets*: "We played our repertoire of traditional Cajun two-steps and waltzes, zydeco and rockabilly. Very low key. A big storm forced the whole party indoors into the barn. After that, a somewhat more raucous jam session ensued."

THE FIRST SEEGER SESSION: 1997

When it came time to record the track for the tribute album a couple months later, Bruce invited back several of the Gotham Playboys, as well as a few associates, friends and relatives, forming an 11-person recording group. The session was on November 2, 1997—just four days after Musselman sent Springsteen the 14-song tape. Recording engineer Toby Scott and Bruce's assistant Kevin Buell set up a video camera on a tripod to document the occasion.

Bruce and the band launched in to that recording session with a lively performance of "Jesse James." The band recorded several more songs, including a few that had been on Musselman's tape. Musselman recalls, "One reason he did so many folk songs, as opposed to songs written by Pete, was that it was at the end of the project that he committed, and we did not want to bump any artists or songs from the project—most of Pete's best songs had been recorded."

Bardfeld says, "We started playing, Bruce was five feet away from me, and I distinctly remember having a 'holy shit' moment. A moment of feeling how powerful his singing and interpretations of these songs were. It was kind of a Bruce Springsteen awakening."

Springsteen eventually submitted an intimate version of "We Shall Overcome" for the Appleseed tribute album. Except for the seemingly unusual mix of instruments, though, it seemed more at home with the quiet songs of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* than with "Jesse James" or "My Oklahoma Home."

THE SECOND SEEGER SESSION: 2005

Over the next seven years, Springsteen put out the four-disc set *Tracks*, reunited the E Street Band, went on two long E Street Band tours, released a new E Street Band album, and finished a solo record. In the fall of 2004, Bruce participated in the "Vote for Change" tour, but, as he later recalled of the election results, "People voted, nothing changed."

Bruce's initial reaction to the election defeat was severe. In an interview with Jon Pareles of the *New York Times*, he recalled, "I had a couple of weeks where it was like, ah, Patti had to peel me off the wall... And then it was onward and upward." Whether or not as a means to go onward and upward, Springsteen was soon involved in several projects. By early 2005, he was preparing to release *Devils & Dust*, an album consisting in substantial part of the songs Bruce had been working on in 1997 after *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. A 30th anniversary edition of *Born to Run* was in preparation. He had some new songs, potentially for the E Street Band.

In an interview with NPR's Renée Montagne regarding *Devils & Dust*, Springsteen noted there was "a lot of music I had sitting around, that still felt very alive to me that was unfinished, so it was something I could do at home. It was music I really liked, and I listened to over the years quite a bit." That sentiment applied to the Seeger material as well.

On March 10, Springsteen rehearsed in Asbury Park for a possible *Devils & Dust*

tour, with Nils Lofgren. At nearly the same time, he was involved in film sessions for a documentary to be included with the *Born to Run* package. Three weeks later, he would perform for VH-1 *Storytellers*. So, projects as different as *Born to Run*, *Devils & Dust*, and *Storytellers* were in progress simultaneously. Right in the middle of this activity, Springsteen also returned to the Seeger Sessions, holding a second session on March 19. Bardfeld says, "It was completely out of the blue, for everybody. And seven-and-a-half years since the first session. So we were surprised, to say the least."

For this second session, Thom Zimny brought down a camera crew to record the occasion. Zimny tells *Backstreets*, "I got a call from Jon Landau, who suggested that I come down to Bruce's farm house and record just a couple of songs." Bardfeld adds, "Bruce and Jon's idea of having Thom come in and film it was really quite brilliant. It shows what the record is about. The record is about process and the making of music, and the DVD really shows that."

The recording session lasted late into the evening. Zimny recalls, "Even though they said it was only going to be two songs, I knew that I had to be prepared, so what I ended up doing was taking a camera for myself, having cinematographer William Rexer on board, giving a camera to my sound recordist, Brad Bergbom, and setting up stationary cameras. So we had something like five cameras running—and then another camera for the horns in the hallway."

The recording results from the session, combined with the efforts from 1997, provided the foundation for a new album. Eight of the 13 songs that would eventually end up on the *We Shall Overcome* release were recorded at the second session: "Erie Canal," "John Henry," "O Mary Don't You Weep," "Pay Me My Money Down," "Old Dan Tucker," "Froggie Went A Courtin'," "Mrs. McGrath," and "Shenandoah."

SONGS FROM JIM MUSSELMAN TO BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, OCTOBER 29, 1997

SONG	RECORDED?	RELEASED?
Jesse James	November 2, 1997	Yes
My Oklahoma Home	November 2, 1997	Yes
We Shall Overcome	November 2, 1997	Yes
Hobo's Lullaby	November 2, 1997	No
I Come and Stand at Every Door	November 2, 1997	No
John Henry	March 19, 2005	Yes
Mrs. McGrath	March 19, 2005	Yes
If I Had a Hammer	January 21, 2006	No
Route 66 Highway Blues	No	No
Talking Union	No	No
Times Are Getting Hard	No	No
Waist Deep in the Big Muddy	No	No
Walking Down Death Row	No	No
Words, Words, Words	No	No

MATT OREL TRACES THE PROGRESS OF THE SEEGER SESSIONS FROM THE BARN TO THE AMERICAN LAND

SESSION 1: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1997

CONDITIONS: A heavy thunderstorm hit New Jersey, starting mid-morning and lasting through mid-afternoon. More than one inch of rain fell, altogether. Conditions cleared by 3:00 p.m., after which temperatures quickly dropped from 60 down to the 30s by late evening.

SONG	STATUS
Jesse James	Released
My Oklahoma Home	Released
We Shall Overcome	Released
Hobo's Lullaby	Unreleased
I Come and Stand at Every Door	Unreleased
Pretty Boy Floyd	Unreleased

SESSION 2: SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2005

CONDITIONS: Typical temperatures for the end of winter, ranging from the upper 30s to the lower 50s over the course of the day. Winds were calm, with only scattered clouds, thus allowing a lot of sunlight into the living room for the daytime recording. The session commenced at 8:00 a.m. and extended until 1:00 a.m. on March 20.

SONG	STATUS
Erie Canal	Released
John Henry	Released
O Mary Don't You Weep	Released
Pay Me My Money Down	Released
Old Dan Tucker	Released
Froggie Went A-Courtin'	Released
Shenandoah	Released
Mrs. McGrath	Released
Michael Row Your Boat Ashore	Unreleased

SESSION 3: SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 2006

CONDITIONS: High temperatures in the 60s, an all-time high for the date. The warm temperatures enabled the band to take their instruments outdoors during the session. As seen on the DVD, winds were also very strong, gusting above 35 m.p.h. at times. Another all-day session, this one ended around 11:00 p.m.

SONG	STATUS
Jacob's Ladder	Released
Buffalo Gals	Released
Eyes On the Prize	Released
How Can I Keep From Singing	Released
American Land	Unreleased★
Bring 'Em Home	Unreleased★
If I Had a Hammer	Unreleased
Worried Man Blues	Unreleased

★ different version of the song released on the *American Land* edition

"John Henry" was one of the songs that Jim Musselman had sent to Bruce in 1997: "I sent 'John Henry,' as Pete would open his concerts for years with this song and it was an important song to Pete." When Bruce came back to the Seeger material in 2005, "John Henry" was among the first tunes he recorded. Bruce, like Pete before him, eventually opened his own concerts with "John Henry."

Zimny describes the filming of the session: "I understood the importance of this chance to film Bruce recording. It's only been done a few times. I understood how lucky I was and how important this was. So I worked really hard on not getting in anyone's way. I really was focusing on 'what's the story in front of me and what sort of coverage do I need to tell this story.' It was great to watch Bruce and the band capture the songs in such a free spirit. I wanted this to be conveyed in the video.

"I couldn't really bring any lights, and it was going to be the kind of thing where we had to remain quiet and invisible to the process and not interrupt Bruce in recording.... I was worried about the lighting situation. But I was really blessed with an amazing day. All the sunlight pouring through that room really captured the tone of the music being played." The session was unscripted, as Sam Bardfeld describes: "We were doing trapeze without a safety net. He plays the song for you once, a couple of arrangement ideas. Have enough time to scrawl out a chord chart, and then boom! You record."

I asked Bardfeld about the opening to "O Mary Don't You Weep": "Bruce said, 'how about the fiddles try'... some kind of intro, and he makes a gesture with his hands. That was a nice, real spontaneous moment. I kinda heard something, and I went for it—I heard a Tom Waits meets Stuff Smith sort of thing."

As with songs like "My Oklahoma Home" and "Jesse James" from the first session, the Gotham Playboys swung the band. "Pay Me My Money Down" played with the rhythms in ways few Springsteen recordings had done before. As Bruce described in an interview with Dave Marsh, "the New Orleans thing, you can hear it happen in 'Pay Me My Money Down.' [The first few lines], that's your basic folk rhythm. The song starts, and that's what I'm thinking—that's where the thing is sitting. But then Larry comes in on the drums, and somewhere, I don't know exactly what verse it happens, but it starts to pick up that 'jump' that's sort of zydeco and Cajun."

As evidenced in the DVD companion to

the album, the session was successful and productive. By the time it ended, Bruce had a total of more than a dozen songs from the two days of recording. *The Seeger Sessions* was a potential album in the making.

THE THIRD SEEGER SESSION: 2006

Most of the next eight months after that second session were spent touring behind *Devils & Dust*. Within a couple of months of the tour's end, Springsteen returned to the Seeger material, this time to complete the album. The entire recording ensemble gathered again for another marathon session on January 21st, 2006.

Songs known to have been recorded at the 2006 session include "Jacob's Ladder," "Buffalo Gals," "Eyes on the Prize," "How Can I Keep From Singing," "If I Had a Hammer," "Worried Man Blues," and "Bring 'Em Home." Several of these songs were more topical than those from the earlier sessions. Springsteen wrote two new ultra-political verses for "Bring 'Em Home." "Eyes on the Prize" and "Buffalo Gals" were suggested to Bruce by Dave Marsh. As Marsh explained to me, "I thought, based on material I'd heard, that 'Eyes on the Prize' might open up from 'We Shall Overcome' itself as a song of the Civil Rights Movement... 'Buffalo Gals' just seemed to have the right spirit."

With the Celtic-flavored "American Land," Bruce had an original song to try with the band. They recorded a non-Seeger cover, "Worried Man Blues" (Carter Family, Woody Guthrie). Taking advantage of an unusually warm January day, Bruce and the entire ensemble also gathered their instruments and engaged in an impromptu bit of playing outdoors.

SEEGER SESSIONS: THE RELEASE

During public rehearsals in Asbury Park just before the album release, Springsteen introduced several songs that weren't going to be on the album, such as "Turn, Turn, Turn," "Those Daring Young Men on the Flying Trapeze," and "When the Saints Go Marching In." (It isn't known which of these songs, if any, had been recorded.) Springsteen also recast the Blind Alfred Reed song "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" from its original Depression setting to address current events in New Orleans. Bruce's version of the song created an instant sensation. A soundboard recording of "Poor Man" from an Asbury Park rehearsal was released to the public via Bruce's official website on April 28, just three days after the album release. Two days



later, the Seeger Session Band's electrifying performance of the song at the New Orleans Jazz Fest was broadcast on the internet. Bruce's stage introduction to the song was widely quoted: "I saw sights that I never thought I would see in an American city. The criminal ineptitude makes you furious... This is for New Orleans, dedicated to President Bystander."

On April 25, 2006, *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* was released. Although the album entered the U.S. charts at #3, first week sales were only 60 percent of the previous year's initial sales for *Devils & Dust*. After the first week, though, sales of *The Seeger Sessions* started trending much better than other recent Springsteen releases, eventually matching total sales of *Devils & Dust*. Several media outlets reported on Springsteen's folk revival, often including comparisons of Bruce's songs to Seeger's versions. One NPR feature placed Springsteen and Seeger sound clips side-by-side. Many reports focused on Springsteen's performance at Jazz Fest, in particular of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live."

The lack of explicit political comment on *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* had its benefits: had a song such as "Bring 'Em Home" been included, the reaction would likely have been largely to the outspoken message of that song, rather than to the music of the entire album. Bracketing the album were songs most often heard, in modern times, on children's records ("Old Dan Tucker" and "Froggie Went A Courtin'"). As a result, many listeners perceived the album as being somewhat frivolous. This perception apparently extended even to Pete Seeger. Although Seeger called it "a great record," he also said, in one interview, "If I was picking the tunes, of course, I would have picked some others... I think I'd pick a few serious songs, like 'Walking Down Death Row.'" Seeger's comment disappointed Dave Marsh, who counters, "It's a shame that Pete Seeger no longer recognizes serious songs when they're sung. Does he really mean to say that 'We Shall Overcome' and 'Jacob's Ladder' aren't serious? Or is he just troubled that they're being sung by a genuinely popular musician?"

Within days of the album's release, there was substantial demand for a politically charged (non-Seeger) song that wasn't on the album. One question that must have arisen, then, was how to release "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" and more additional material, beyond Bruce's website.

THE PLAYERS OF THE SEEGER SESSIONS

NAME	INST.	CONNECTION	SESSIONS
Sam Bardfeld	violin	Gotham Playboys	f, 1, 2, 3, u, w
Art Baron	tuba	recommendation from band	s, u, w
Frank Bruno	guitar	Bruce's cousin	1, 2, 3, u, w
Jeremy Chatzky	bass	Gotham Playboys	f, 1, 2, 3, u, w
Mark Clifford	banjo	chance meeting	1, 2, 3
Larry Eagle	percussion	Gotham Playboys	f, 1, 2, 3, u, w
Clark Gayton	trombone	tour	w
Charles Giordano	accordion	Gotham Playboys associate	1, 2, 3, u, w
Curtis King, Jr.	vocals	tour	u, w
Greg Liszt	banjo	tour	u, w
Lisa Lowell	vocals	"The Girls"	3, u, w
Eddie Manion	saxophone	Miami Horns	1, 2, 3, u, w
Cindy Mizelle	vocals	tour	u, w
Mark Pender	trumpet	Miami Horns	2, 3, s, u
Curt Ramm	trumpet	tour	w
Marty Rifkin	pedal steel	tour	u, w
Richie "La Bamba" Rosenberg	trombone	Miami Horns	1, 2, 3, u
Patti Scialfa	vocals	"The Girls"	1, 2, 3, p
Marc Anthony Thompson	guitar	Nebraska tribute, tour	u, w
Soozie Tyrell	violin	"The Girls," Gotham Playboys	1, 2, 3, u, w

f = fiesta in the field

1 = November 2, 1997

2 = March 19, 2005

3 = January 21, 2006

s = studio (overdub)

p = partial tour (US & world)

u = US tour

w = world tour



THE GROUPS IN THE SEEGER SESSIONS

THE GOTHAM PLAYBOYS

The Gotham Playboys include Sam Bardfeld, Jeremy Chatzky, Larry Eagle, Will Holshouser, Red Suydam, and frequently Soozie Tyrell. Tyrell arranged for them to play at a party at Bruce's house in 1997. Charlie Giordano often substituted for Holshouser; when a scheduling conflict prevented Holshouser from attending the first recording session, Giordano went instead. Lisa Lowell often substituted for Tyrell, particularly when Tyrell was on tour with the E Street Band.

THE MIAMI HORNS

"The Miami Horns" is just one of the many names for the horn section of Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes. Many players have been in the Miami Horns. Eddie Manion and Richie "La Bamba" Rosenberg first appeared on record with the horns on Southside's 1977 album *This Time It's for Real*. Mark "Love Man" Pender joined in the early '80s. Manion, Rosenberg and Pender toured with the E Street Band in 1988.

THE GIRLS

Soozie Tyrell, Lisa Lowell and Patti Scialfa were dubbed "The Girls" when they appeared as Southside Johnny's backing vocalists on the *Sacrifice* album and subsequent tour in 1980. They have appeared together on many projects, including Springsteen's *Lucky Town* album, and on Tyrell's and Scialfa's solo projects. Scialfa has been a member of the E Street Band since 1984; Tyrell since 2002.



THE SEEGER SESSIONS: AMERICAN LAND EDITION TRACK LISTING

SONG	RECORDING DATE	LOCATION
Old Dan Tucker	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
Jesse James	November 2, 1997	Boxwood Studios
Mrs. McGrath	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
O Mary Don't You Weep	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
John Henry	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
Erie Canal	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
Jacob's Ladder	January 21, 2006	Boxwood Studios
My Oklahoma Home	November 2, 1997	Boxwood Studios
Eyes On the Prize	January 21, 2006	Boxwood Studios
Shenandoah	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
Pay Me My Money Down	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
We Shall Overcome	November 2, 1997	Boxwood Studios
Froggie Went A-Courtin'	March 19, 2005	Boxwood Studios
Buffalo Gals	January 21, 2006	Boxwood Studios
How Can I Keep From Singing	January 21, 2006	Boxwood Studios
How Can a Poor Man...	April 2006	Asbury Park, NJ
Bring 'Em Home	June 17, 2006	Clarkston, MI
American Land	June 22, 2006	New York, NY
How Can a Poor Man... (video)	June 5, 2006	Los Angeles, CA
Bring 'Em Home (video)	June 6, 2006	Concord, CA

SEEGER SESSIONS SONGS ON BRUCESPRINGSTEEN.NET

SONG	RECORDING DATE	LOCATION
How Can a Poor Man...	April 2006	Asbury Park, NJ
Bring 'Em Home	May 18, 2006	Disclab, Oslo

AMERICAN LAND EDITION

By early May 2006, one solution had been proposed: an expanded release. Other artists had done expanded releases before, though not Bruce. Such a package could include "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live," "Bring 'Em Home" and possibly other songs. So, the updated album could include direct responses to the disasters of Katrina and Iraq.

As added features, the set could be presented as separate CD and DVD discs, rather than in the much criticized DualDisc format used for the initial release; it could also move the "bonus" tracks from the DVD side of the original release onto the CD.

The contents for the proposed expanded release were modified several times over the course of the spring and summer. At all points, however, they included the entire original album, "Poor Man" and "Bring 'Em Home," and an extended version of the DVD.

For a third additional track, consideration was given to several songs. These included "Long Black Veil," another non-Seeger song that Springsteen had added to the live set.

Finally, at the Madison Square Garden show toward the end of the U.S. tour, Bruce introduced "American Land" to a live audience. Reaction again was immediate: Where did this song come from? Was it original? And, why not release it?

"American Land" became the final audio piece for the expanded album. The release date was set for October 3, coinciding with the tour's second swing through Europe. For the DVD portion of the package, the expanded video of the original sessions was included, as well as two of the Chris Hilson-directed AOL videos from the U.S. leg of the tour, and a new Thom Zimny-directed video of "Pay Me My Money Down" that incorporated footage from the first European leg.

SONGS OF THE AMERICAN LAND EDITION

HOW CAN A POOR MAN STAND SUCH TIMES AND LIVE

"How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live" was written and originally recorded by Blind Alfred Reed as a Depression lament in 1929. It was another

three decades before The New Lost City Ramblers (including Pete's brother Mike Seeger) resurrected it for their *Songs From the Depression* album.

The most famous recording of the song is most likely by Ry Cooder, from his eponymous 1970 album. Bruce published a statement on his website saying that he first heard it from Cooder, adding, "to his arrangement we owe a debt."

Blind Alfred Reed's song dealt with topics such as prices and prohibition. Its last verse described a drunken doctor overcharging for a "humbug pill and a dose of dope." Bruce kept that verse and added three of his own, detailing his reaction to the Katrina disaster and the government's response to it.

The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition includes two versions of "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times and Live": on CD, a tour rehearsal, recorded April 13, 2006, at Convention Hall in Asbury Park; the DVD includes the live performance from June 5 at The Greek Theater in Los Angeles. The video, directed by Chris Hilson, was part of the "18 Nights of Bruce" package shown via the America Online internet service.

BRING 'EM HOME

Seeger wrote "Bring Them Home (If You Love Your Uncle Sam)" in 1965 to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The song was used at rallies throughout the late '60's, and the words were published in *Broadside* magazine in 1968. Seeger's original chorus:

*If you love your Uncle Sam
Bring 'em home, Bring 'em home
Support our boys in Vietnam
Bring 'em home, Bring 'em home*

Pete's original version focused not only on the terrible cost of sending young people off to die in the war, but also of the misplaced priorities of the government (note—all verses of all versions listed here have "Bring 'em home, Bring 'em home" as the second and fourth lines; the remaining notes here list only the first and third lines of the verses): "The world needs housing, food and schools / And learning a few universal rules."

But the song also included three verses in which Seeger explained that he wasn't really a pacifist, and would defend his homeland if it were under attack: "Even if they brought their planes to bomb / Even if they brought helicopters and napalm."

Seeger performed "Bring Them Home" on the ABC-TV program *Music Scene* in 1970; almost as remarkable as the riveting



performance is that ABC let him do it at all. A recording of "Bring Them Home" was released on the Columbia album *Young vs. Old* in 1971; although that album was nominated for a Grammy award, it is currently out of print.

Barbara Dane recorded "Bring Them Home" with her own lyrics at a rally with G.I.s from Fort Hood in 1969. Her version had nearly 20 verses, including lines such as: "We wanta end this war right now / Don't take a genius to figure out how." Dane's recording is available from Smithsonian Folkways on the album *FTA! Songs of the GI Resistance*.

In 2003, Pete Seeger and Appleseed's Jim Musselman updated "Bring Them Home" to address the situation in Iraq. Musselman tells the story: "When the Iraq war broke out, I got Pete in the studio in Woodstock, NY, to record some anti-war songs. I asked Pete if it was okay to add and change verses to 'Bring Them Home,' and he said it was fine. I rewrote the chorus... to 'If you love this land of the free / bring them back from overseas.' I recorded the song with Pete and added Billy Bragg, Steve Earle and Ani DiFranco on verses. When it came out I sent the CD [*Seeds: The Songs of Pete Seeger, Vol III*, on Appleseed Recordings] with the song to Jon Landau and to Bruce with a thank you note to both of them for appearing on the first CD of the trilogy and for their support and commitment to the project over the years."

In addition to changing the chorus, the 2003 version eliminated the verse with the napalm reference and added a new verse: "So now we don't want to fight for oil / Underneath some foreign soil."

Springsteen recorded his own version, "Bring 'Em Home," with the Seeger Sessions Band during the third session, on January 21, 2006. His initial recording was based on the 2003 version that Musselman had sent. Bruce made some changes in the home recording, replacing the oil/soil version with two hard-hitting verses of his own:

*This country belongs to you and me
We don't need no imperial presidency*

*You don't want your freedom gone
You better know which side you're on*

Less than three weeks after recording the song (but months before anyone knew of it), Springsteen appeared on the telecast of the Grammy Awards show to perform "Devils & Dust." As his performance ended, he spoke, "Bring 'em home."

"Bring 'Em Home" was not included on the initial release of *The Seeger Sessions*, but Bruce continued to work on it. He removed all but the first three verses, replacing them with two new verses as well as two verses from the Civil War song "When Johnny Comes Marching Home":

*The men will cheer the boys will shout
And the ladies will all turn out*

*The church bells will peal with joy
To welcome home our darling boys*

Bruce changed "ladies" to "we," "peal" to "ring," and added "girls" in the final line; otherwise the verses remained as in the traditional.

Dave Marsh says of "Bring 'Em Home": "No one sings this song without updating it. It is always there to update (and unfortunately there is almost always occasion to do so). This is the folk process as practice, not just ideology—a rare thing."

The effect of Bruce's changes was to update the song's focus from moral outrage over the government's actions and priorities to a more personal view of the people who sacrifice their blood to satisfy the politicians' "grand theories."

On May 18, 2006, Bruce used an off-day of the first leg of the European tour to go into the Disclab studio in Oslo, Norway. There, he recorded a new vocal track for "Bring 'Em Home" using the new lyrics. This version was released to the public via Springsteen's website on June 12.

The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition includes two versions of "Bring 'Em Home": on CD, a live version, recorded June 17, 2006, at DTE Energy Music Theater in Clarkston, MI; the DVD includes the live performance from June 6 at Concord Pavilion in California. The video, directed by Chris Hilson, was part of the "18 Nights of Bruce" package shown via the America Online internet service.

AMERICAN LAND

"American Land" is an original Bruce Springsteen composition. There are no prior recordings of this song.

In 1947, Andrew Kovaly taught Pete Seeger a song he had written in Slovakian, titled "I Lie in the American Land." The song told the true story of a co-worker of Kovaly's who had immigrated to Pittsburgh from Slovakia, saved enough money to send for his family, but was killed in a mine accident before the family arrived. Seeger recorded an English version of the song,

called "He Lies in the American Land"; that song inspired the story told in Springsteen's "American Land."

The music for "American Land" is Celtic in feel. Although no specific song has been identified as an inspiration for the melody, "American Land" bears a strong resemblance to the traditional Scottish song "Gallant Forty-Twa."

Springsteen first tried out "American Land" with the Seeger Sessions Band during the home sessions. But he didn't come back to it until the Madison Square Garden show on June 22, 2006. According to Sam Bardfeld, "we learned it at the soundcheck and played it that night... I vaguely recalled the fiddle line from it, but it was a totally different arrangement."

Bruce introduced "American Land" as "an immigrant song for New York City" at its premiere performance; that performance of the song is included on both the CD and DVD of *The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition*. The DVD was directed by Thom Zimny, incorporating both the live recording as well as other footage.

PAY ME MY MONEY DOWN

"Pay Me My Money Down (Tour Version)" is on the DVD of *The Seeger Sessions: American Land Edition*. The audio is from the studio recording.

Thom Zimny describes "Pay Me My Money Down (Tour Version)": "I had worked on a video for 'Pay Me My Money Down,' which incorporated some of the images from the rehearsals and some of the images that I filmed from the first leg of the European tour. It was a great, great opportunity to see this band perform in Europe and also the European audiences, which were tremendous."

Says Jim Musselman of the expanded release: "The three songs that were added dealt with: one, the war ('Bring 'Em Home'); two, the travesty of Hurricane Katrina ('Poor Man'); and three, immigration ('American Land'). I feel the *American Land Edition* covers every aspect of music—folk songs, political songs, silly songs, work songs, etc."

American Land wouldn't be the last of the Seeger Sessions releases. The Dublin shows near tour's end were documented on both audio and video, adding to the project's legacy with a June release on CD and DVD. As Thom Zimny relates from those final concerts, "it's been great to watch this thing grow from that farmhouse to seeing them live in Europe."



"I Feel Like a Pirate!"

Marah's Bielanko Brothers tell tales of the studio, stage, and beyond

by Roderick Jones

In the decade that Marah has been in existence, the band's sound, substance, and live performances have prompted frequent comparisons to Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. Marah front men Dave and Serge Bielanko are bona fide Friends Of Bruce as well, going back to 2002, when the Boss contributed backing vocals and scorching guitar riffs to the opening song of their album *Float Away With the Friday Night Gods*. At a Giants Stadium concert in 2003, Springsteen invited the brothers on stage to join him on "Raise Your Hand," and just this December, Marah had a chance to do some inviting of its own. Bruce helped close out Marah's set at the Light of Day benefit show with a reprise of "Raise Your Hand," then stayed on to take part in a heavily-amped, four-axe assault on "Reservation Girl," a tune considered by many aficionados to be the crown jewel of the live Marah experience.

"Reservation Girl" is one of more than two-dozen songs on vivid display on *Sooner or Later in Spain*, a live DVD released in November. Along with material filmed on Marah's tour last year, the DVD features footage of *High Fidelity* author Nick Hornby — as an opening act in select cities, Hornby has read new essays about his favorite songs, with the band providing musical accents and interludes.

Marah's most recent studio albums were released in the fall of 2005. *If You Didn't Laugh, You'd Cry* met with critical acclaim, and with *A Christmas Kind of Town*, the Bielankos realized a longstanding desire to pay homage to the holidays. *Backstreets* rock 'n' roll taxidermist Roderick Jones spoke with Dave by phone on the eve of the studio albums' release, then with both brothers in the basement of the Abbey Pub in Chicago.

Backstreets: Dave, when you were on tour more than a year ago, and *If You Didn't Laugh, You'd Cry* was probably just a twinkle in your eye, I had the chance to hang out with you after a show. You told me that the new album would be raw and emotional. Is that how it ended up?

Dave: This album is so very internal. It's really a personal one. We just wanted to play some songs and not really think about them, not really have a grand scope in mind with them. And if it got too epic and shit, we were all about cutting it back.

When we went into this, we had come home from a really long European tour. Kirk [Henderson, bass and keyboard player] and I got a phone call from an engineer at this really posh studio; he really liked our stuff and said, "Why don't you come over and

record a day and we'll see how it goes?" I had this little song, "City of Dreams," sitting around. We borrowed our friend's guitars because our gear was still away, took the subway—we didn't even have the guitars in cases—and went over and cut that song and "Walt Whitman Bridge" and listened to them back. It was more folky than anything we'd done before, but it felt good. And it felt like they could be sad and haunting sort of songs, but they had a big hopefulness to them. That's pretty much exactly where we were at: If you didn't laugh, you'd cry. I think that started it. Then my brother came in, and we'd go to a song just long enough to know we liked it. There were no rehearsals leading up to the record. I wanted that spontaneity... you know, you're a lot more likely to get close to Jerry Lee Lewis or *Exile on Main Street* if you approach music that way.

RAISE YOUR VOICE

Springsteen and Serge Bielanko (right) of Marah
double up on a mic at Light of Day 7.
December 2, 2006



In the past, you've cited literary influences for your songs. I'm thinking about the memoir *Vietnam Perkasie* as an inspiration for "Round Eye Blues," or the trilogy *20,000 Streets Under the Sky* for that song and album. Even though, as Dave said, you were trying to keep it from getting too "epic," were there any literary influences on this album?

Serge: With our band there's always been a sort of literary influence. Dave and I have been reading since we were young. We were lucky in that, even though we didn't grow up with a lot of money, my mom [said], "I'll always buy you books." And we took advantage of that. It's probably the best education we could have ever had.

There were a lot of books I was reading at the time that I was writing [songs for the album]. I was reading [Richard Yates's] *Revolutionary Road*. I was also reading [Anthony Bourdain's] *Kitchen Confidential*, which was really influential on the song "Dishwasher's Dream."

Dave: I think what I was saying was, when we were halfway through the record, it seemed like—in a really good way—the scope of the songs was very small. At times, it was just like, isn't it cool to write about your friends and about what we do on a day-to-day basis? Just sitting on my stoop drinking coffees, and kind of the way we feel—you know, the state of the union. It seemed pretty cool and appropriate that there was nothing that grand about it, just simple, small stories being told.

I suppose there are some bands that are all about the song, but I get the sense with you guys that it's more about the album and how you put it together. If *You Didn't Laugh, You'd Cry* has ups and downs, and interludes, and intermissions. How did you come to lay it out the way you did—with transitions like an *a cappella* before a song, or the part played on the pump organ?

Dave: Even with the artwork, I wanted the thing to feel like we *made* it and are giving it to you. The engineers were constantly trying to clean up that kind of shit. But we were like, "No, don't erase that!" There's something different about listening to music that feels like you might be in the room with it. Those unpolished moments kind of make it for me, because that's how it felt playing

it and being there. It was important to us to leave it on, to leave it as raw as possible. I think it's an interesting way to look at a group of songs—as they actually happen.

Kirk Henderson, left, and Dave Bielanko



"My brother and I are slightly mad and insane, very frantic with music, and very emotional about it. Kirk grounds the whole situation."
—Dave Bielanko

Serge: A lot of the stuff we ended up doing in Kirk's apartment. One of the things he started was a little place where he could put "Kirk's funhouse"—certain sounds or talking, or whatever. Occasionally we'd be like, "Hey, Kirk, put that in your funhouse." There were times when we'd go through there and see what would work here and there.

Talk a bit more about Kirk being a part of the band. You all play a lot of instruments, but Kirk's credited with bass, piano, organ, and some instruments I don't even recognize, as well as with recording and engineering.

Dave: My brother and I are slightly mad and insane, and very frantic with music, and very emotional about it. Kirk grounds

the whole situation. It's absolutely essential [because] someone needs to be thinking about stacking chord voicings and what's actually happening musically. We balance each other out beautifully, and he's one of the most exceptional human beings I think I've ever met, so he's completely a large part of it now.

Serge: Kirk's major talent—and he's got many, many of them—is the fact that he's humble. I mean that in the most positive light. Because you've got two people that are essentially nuts when it comes to making their music and records. You introduce a third person who's slowly becoming a part of a triumvirate, if

that person tries to exercise some Napoleonic power or something, then it's just all-out war. If that person slowly, humbly trickles down his [influence], it's so much more beneficial and powerful.

On this album, Serge does more lead vocals than he has in the past. What changed to allow that to happen?

Dave: On a couple of them, basically we were trying to cut a basic track. The songs were so new that if they were his, he would have a go at what we thought was a scratch vocal. But then it would just be like, "Fuck, that's it!" So we kept Serge's vocals wherever we could.

Serge: I don't know. When I write songs, I envision Dave singing them—it's as simple as that. Those guys were [willing to say], "You know, you did a good take on that." Literally, songs that I sang on this record were not meant for me to sing, originally.

Dave: We both sang "The Apartment," so there were two versions of that one.

Serge: Yeah, that might have been the only one that we actually challenged each other on.

Dave: "Dishwasher's Dream" has too many words, and I didn't have enough time to learn them. So he sang that. We were like, that's cool enough, let's just put it on there.

Serge: Adam [Garbinski, guitarist] sent me a text message one night, out of the blue. I

was sitting in a bar with my wife, and there's this text message, "Serge... 'Diswasher's Dream' is a beautiful song" [laughs].

Dave: Those guys are mushy.

Serge: It's really nice to have that. It's got to come from within, from the people that are closest to the music and your life—the band, and the people that you live with. And if they say, "You gotta do this," even if you have doubts, you have to trust in that.

Do you guys do any sort of writing exercises to get your juices flowing, or is it whatever happens when you're sitting down with a notebook?

Dave: I would say the exercise is how much you throw away. The writing process never ends. You're always listening to other people speak. I wish I could turn it off sometimes—it does become a bit obsessive. Half the time, people are talking to me and I don't know what the hell they're saying... I'm listening to the rhythm of the words, or whatever.

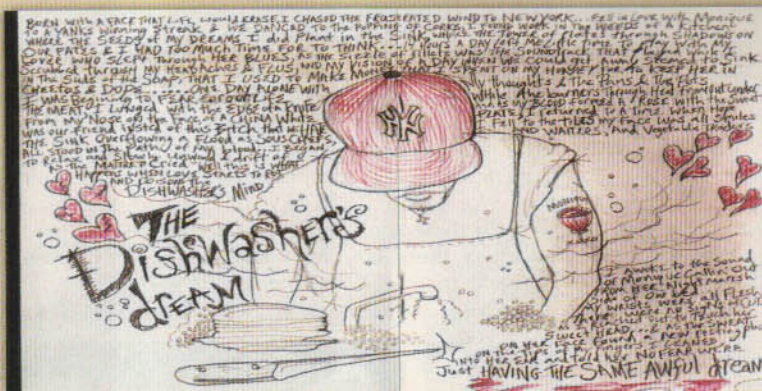
Steve Earle always used to try to get us to write no matter what and, say, write two hours a day. And it's a really strong fucking thing to do. Sometimes life does not afford us that luxury, but as much as humanly possible, we're writing. I think it's almost as important to write a lot of bad shit, or shit that you're able to get rid of, to hone in

on what you should be writing.

Dave, you mentioned the artwork for *If You Didn't Laugh, You'd Cry* earlier. You did not just the cover, but also an illustration to go along with each song. Are you moonlighting as a graphic artist?

Dave: My father's an excellent painter. It's something that might be inside me, but I've never cultivated it at all. It was while we were mixing—which is a hellacious process for us, because we just sit there while people plug shit in. While that was happening, with each song—listening to the kick drum and stuff—I would draw little pictures, not really intending to use them. There was a whole different set of artwork made, and at the end I kind of broke [the artist's] heart and said, "We gotta use this stuff." But I think we all agreed, it felt right.

On *A Christmas Kind of Town*, the skits really cracked me up. I was curious to know, how did those get created?



Serge: I love Christmas music. I love Christmas time. We got together, and the three of us said to our label, we really want to make a Christmas record. And I don't think they thought we could do it, because we were literally making the other record when we said it. We ended up doing it in July. It was so hot in New York City this year—100, 110 degrees every day. As we started to make it in Kirk's apartment, we just set up some mics and brought every instrument we had. We decorated it for Christmas and had a blast.

Along the way we were like, it'd be kinda cool if we could make it Marah, you know? How're we going to do that? Okay, aside from the song choices, we could talk on there, like a hip-hop record... we could have this running theme of skits or something,

THOSE GUYS ARE MUSHY

Left to Right: Dave Bielanko, Dave Peterson, Serge Bielanko, Kirk Henderson, and Adam Garbinski.



in a sense, like an old radio show. But also really horrible acting. We just wrote those on the fly: "Okay, you say this; you say this." Literally we were writing it as we were [recording]. It was fun.

The Christmas music that we really do love, and play the hell out of, is the stuff that was written in that World War II era, and there was this need for these songs for soldiers overseas. You know, the candle in the window, the "I miss Christmas", the "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas." Those are very traditional, almost conservative notions that still ring true at the holiday time. In a world where everything's completely upside-down, it is a nice thing to be able to say, let's put on this Sinatra Christmas record and put it on repeat, man, and let's just sit here and have a couple glasses of wine and look at our tree. That's a nice, simple way to spend time with people that you care about. That was what we were doing.

Serge, for me, one of the best parts of a Marah show is when, right in the middle of a song, you close your eyes and summon a tall tale from somewhere to tell about Phil Collins being God, or something like that. I like the stories, but I also love watching the faces of the other guys in the band as you're talking. It looks like they're just as surprised and amused as the audience—but maybe a little anxious, too—about what you're going to say next. Where does that come from? Do you say to yourself before a show, "I'm thinking about Phil Collins, so maybe I'll talk about it during the break in 'People of the Underground' tonight"?

Serge: [Laughs] I always thought that if you went to see a band, there was always this yearning for some sort of a connection beyond the music. There is this yearning on the part of someone in the crowd to maybe know more about the person, and yet it's hard to do that. Even after a show when we sit and have a drink with people and talk with them and stuff. You can cover superficial topics and all, but we're never gonna really know each other like these guys in the band know each other, or like you and your friends know each other. Sometimes I don't talk at all—I don't feel it. The crowd's not there. If a crowd is clapping and they're really into a show and they're showing a lot of love from the get-go, God, the band goes over the top. If they're not, it's like, I don't really know what to say—you draw a blank.

Dave: Depends on the band, too. Bands are like baseball teams. [When you] get some momentum going, it's very unpredictable, and I think the audience can see it.

People are smarter than most people give them credit for. You can tell if something's rehearsed. I always loved the fact that [in a Marah concert] there was an element of *this could go completely tits-up at any moment*, and keeping that danger in it is really exciting. To be yourself, it takes a while to get there. But once that happens, the momentum becomes really strong. And then what you're actually watching on stage is people being incredibly real with each other.



“On stage...
I'm closing my
eyes—it's just now,
it's just tonight.”
—Serge Bielanko

Serge: It's true. I think every night, you want the show to be this incredibly smooth sailing vessel, and everything is sonically perfect. And lately I've realized it's not that. On stage—like you said, I'm closing my eyes—it's just now, it's just tonight. There's no thinking about tomorrow. In the middle of the show, it'll be, *Yes! We're in Chicago, we're playing rock 'n' roll*, and I look over at Kirk and I'll stick my tongue out at him, or whatever. That's what it's about, to me.

Dave: I don't think we know what it's like to be hyped. We know what it's like to be playing for people who are paying very close attention to every song, and know what we did last night, and read about it. It's a different kind of audience to play for, so I think you have to give more of yourself. There's no doubt our band has an emotional connec-

tion with its fans, where a lot of bands don't have that. And at times I'm jealous of that, because I think it would be liberating. But in the long run, I don't think so.

There's nothing more energizing than to see the people in the band having fun.

Dave: Right. It's not like you're looking for that or anything, but all of a sudden you're like, this could not be more real, the energy coming off. You can just tell that people are having fun.

Serge: What we're talking about right now, these are tough things to put into words. It's hard to put into words what happens on the stage. I know it's something that we love to do. I think we all appreciate the fact that we're able to do it at this point. It's the one time of day when it doesn't really feel like a job. It really does feel like a privilege.

Dave, I think you've said that you'd never recommend being in a rock 'n' roll band as a career

choice, but that it's the only thing you've ever done. From where you stand today, what are the aspirations that you've already fulfilled as a band? And more importantly, what are the dreams that you are still hoping will come true?

Dave: [Laughs] I think there's a few more great pieces of music we'll make, for sure. As far as me not recommending it as a lifestyle, I was probably being facetious about that. Honestly, I feel like a pirate a lot of the time. Our life is based on one of the most insane things that it could be based on—it's artistic and it's passionate. Plus you add brothers to it, and it's a war. When we play a show it feels like us versus you, you know, until about halfway through it, when it feels like we're celebrating music. There are so many ups and downs and so much beauty to what we do, and traveling the world and getting to go to places that my good friends will never ever get to see. We work incredibly hard, and I would never trade it for anything. If it were taken away from me, I would become a horribly desperate person, and no one would ever love me again. ☺

With keyboard player Christine Smith added to the lineup, the members of Marah spent the better part of April and May in various studios, a country cabin, and an acoustically-blessed bathroom. They were recording songs for a new album, expected later this year.

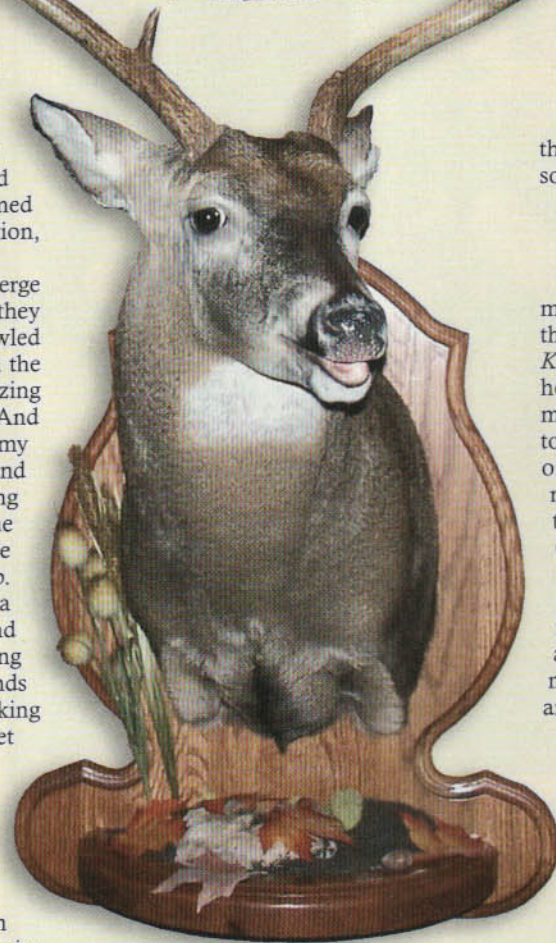
It had been months since the clock had struck midnight with me holding some stage-front real estate in a loud bar. Normally I'd be in bed, half-asleep, waiting for my baby son's squeal to signal the next feeding time. So even as I stood within splash-distance of the sweat zinging off the lead singer's cheeks, I kept sneaking peaks at my watch. The band was a quartet from Philadelphia named Marah, and despite my divided attention, my senses were absorbing it all.

The two front men, Dave and Serge Bielanko, bobbed and pounced as they slashed at their instruments and howled into the microphone. Serge was out in the crowd, standing on tables, soliloquizing in a wispy Southern-gospel falsetto. And then he was squirming down at my feet—actually writhing in beer spill and February boot slush—all while blowing a ferocious harmonica solo. At times the two brothers came together around the same mic and sang harmonies lip to lip. More than once, the room filled with a static firestorm of sound, and Dave and Serge would stare at each other, trading wails on their guitars from opposite ends of the stage, shoulders leaned back, taking slow steps with heavy feet until they met axe to axe.

At night's end, I bought their CD and drove home through lamp-lit winter streets while *Kids in Philly* played over the whirr of warm air blowing through the dashboard vents. My wife Veronica let me sleep in an extra hour the next day, and between sips of coffee, I tried to explain what I was feeling. Then Felix started flinging cheerios, and his diaper needed changing. So I gave up, and wrote it off as me not getting out very often. I figured, maybe all bands are like this nowadays.

But as Saturday turned into Sunday and then into a string of days at the office, I

ROCK 'n' ROLL TAXIDERMISTRY



By Roderick Jones

couldn't shake the sensation that I'd witnessed a historic event, like Sammy Sosa's 60th home run, or the inauguration of a president.

One night I sat on the couch with Veronica after Felix had gone to sleep and tried again: "It's like, I want to cry when I think about it," I said. "It was really loud."

I was failing miserably.

"Sounds like one of those 'you had to be there' things," she said.

I couldn't go on. I couldn't put into words that it wasn't just the volume, or the way they let their cigarettes hang from their lips, or the chord changes that jolted me like a defibrillator. It wasn't just the stories they told about a bar-room brawl and a pizza guy who handed out smokes to

school kids. And it was more than Serge's greasy hair hanging in his face, or how when he played harmonica and guitar, he also stomped on a tambourine to get that much extra rhythm into the atmosphere.

"I can't explain it," I said.

"Maybe it's like taxidermy," she said.

"What?" I asked. "Stuffed animals?"

"Like no matter how hard you try to get the details right and make it seem real to someone else, it's just not the same."

And so I became a rock 'n' roll taxidermist, trying to recapture the sensations of that concert. I bought more CDs. I mailed *Kids in Philly* to my best friend from childhood with a note that said, "This is the music we would have made if we grew up to be rock stars (is it too late?)." I logged onto the band's online message board more often than a pilot checks in with air traffic control on blizzard descent into O'Hare. I started transcribing lyrics and working out the chords on my acoustic guitar. I asked my third-grade cousin to illustrate the verses of "Pigeon Heart" for a picture book for Felix. I hummed the melody of "East" as I rocked him in my arms at bedtime.

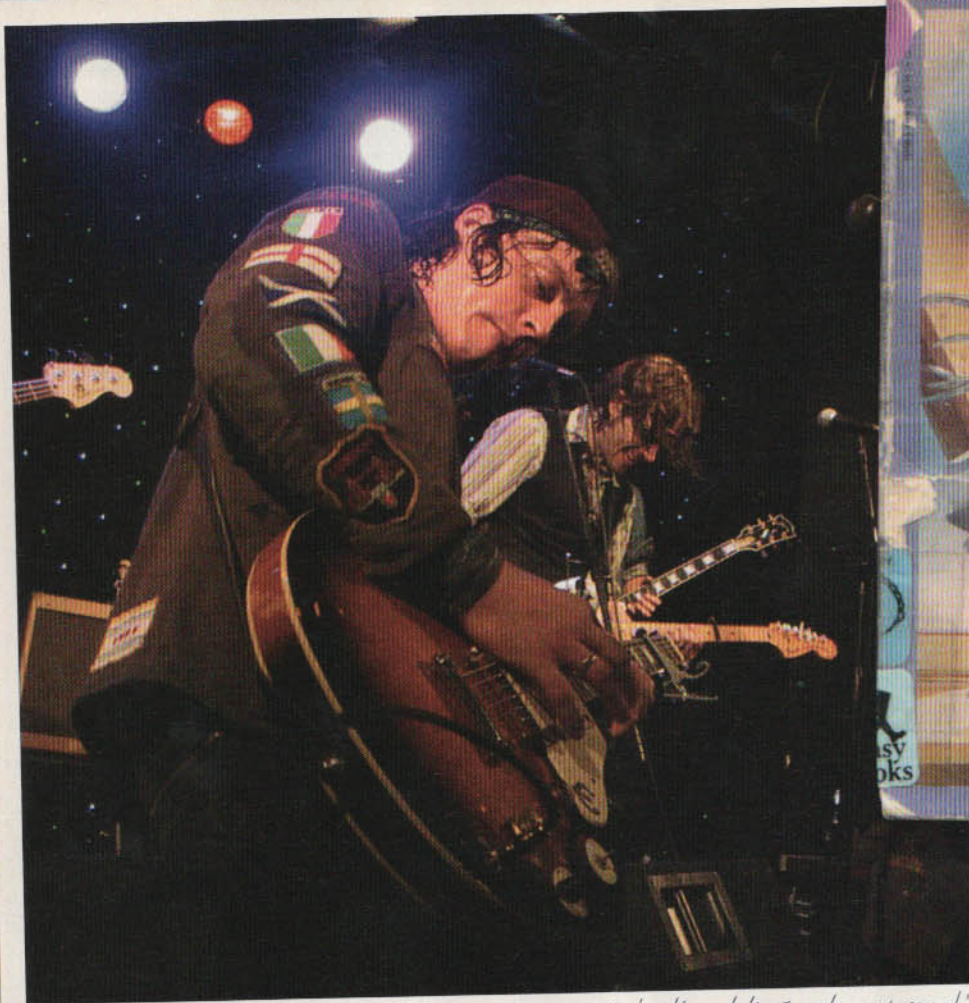
Then I wrote them a letter.

When you're ten years old and you send a fan letter and a drawing off to Men at Work, it's cute. When you're 34, and the objects of your praise are about the same age as you are, it's not so cute. My self-esteem didn't get a boost when, in a moment of potential marital bonding, I invited Veronica to read it. After just two paragraphs she said, "You need a therapist."

She's probably got a point. I was—I am—still unsure about whether the city life is what I want for my son. I dream of big yards for whiffle ball and tree houses for him, not concrete and Latin Kings graffiti. But when I listen to Dave and Serge's music, that reservoir of anxiety evaporates. I start spotting the squirrels from "My Heart is the Bums on the Street" scampering through an evening downpour; I spy the transvestite burn-out from "Feather Boa" waiting at the bus stop. These songs make me feel like I belong in their scenes, and in my real life, I start recognizing the characters around me. I see the poetry in the Bosnian babushkas that cackle and chain-smoke on the benches in Felix's favorite playground; I get a smile when I pass the barbershop called "The Surgeon of Fades" on the way to work.

Marah's songs evoke the sounds and stories of the band's old stomping ground in South Philly. They give glory to the city life, not by sugarcoating it, but by bringing out what's exceptional about it. I listen to these songs, and I stop longing for green





"The room filled with a static firestorm of sound."

grass and marvel at how lucky I am to be a part of my city's pumping heart, its gasping lungs. That's what I put in my letter to Marah.

At the concert, Dave wore a green army jacket covered with all kinds of patches of country flags and others bearing slogans like "FUNK" and "Born to Run." During a break between songs, Serge told a tale of life on the road, how while he drove through Iowa cornfields for hours on end, Dave sat blissfully in back, embroidering patches onto his jacket. So I put one other thing in the envelope with my letter before I sent it off: a patch of the Chicago city flag.

Marah came back into town several months later. They ripped through a half-dozen songs before taking a break to address the crowd. As he quietly strummed the rhythm to the next song, Dave said it was a pleasure to be back.

"Somebody sent me a patch of the Chicago city flag, and I sewed it onto my jacket," he said. "That was cool."

Several people in the crowd let out a whoop of approval as he turned sideways to display the white rectangle with blue stripes and red stars above his right hip.

He counted off four beats, and the band revved into its version of "Fly Me to the Moon."

I was already there.

If there's such a thing as a fan gene, I've got it. Not everyone is susceptible to going overboard in expressing enthusiasm for an artist, an athlete, or an image, but I am. Perhaps a single blemished protein rests on a chromosome of mine—hidden, harmless, and dormant until exposure to something otherwise benign in the environment activates it. Most people would be immune to the lure of the 1979 Pittsburgh Pirates, for instance, but not me. I was nine years old, smitten with the gold stars that each player sewed onto his cap, the "We Are Family" theme song, the bumblebee uniforms, and the World Series Championship. I had my mom sew stars on my hat and convinced my dad to take me down to the Pirates' spring training camp in Florida.

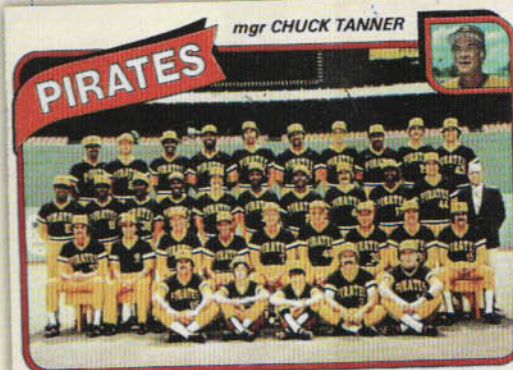
Even before my daydreams were populated by Pirates, I was a Daniel Pinkwater fan. His book *Lizard Music* was the first thing I remember reading that made me feel as though I was reading about myself. I felt the same way about



Wingman, even though the main character was Chinese. Every time I went to the public library, I scanned the P's in the juvenile section for a new book of his, even if I'd just been there the day before and knew the chances were zero.

My ailment had mostly gone into remission for decades; other than The Boss, nothing seemed to activate the fan gene. Until Marah: The band and its music were a perfect storm of style and substance that rumbled over me.

For days after the concert when Dave had mentioned the Chicago patch, my heart ached. The "Point Breeze" riff pinballed around beneath my skull, and my emotional pendulum swung back and forth between elation and longing. I felt as though I'd had a slow dance at the homecoming ball with the school's prettiest girl, but no chance of becoming her boyfriend. I felt like I'd had a reunion with my college buddies, throwing Frisbees and playing quarters, laughing and talking deep into the night, but woke



up hungover and old. I wanted back my youth, I wanted back some recklessness, I wanted to go through my days feeling like I felt when I went to a Marah concert. And I wanted to meet the guys in the band.



The next Marah concert I went to took place on a September night in the parking lot of an isolated industrial corridor. The band blasted through its set over the grind of semi trucks from the Chicago fleet pulling in and out of a hangar on the other side of a fence. Felix and Veronica were away for the weekend at her parents' place, and I had no reason to cut the night short. After the encore, I got up the nerve to introduce myself to the brothers.

Behind the stage, Serge and Dave were standing along a railing, talking with some folks, while another handful of people waited their turn. When I got my chance, I told them my name and said I was the one who had sent the patch.

As Dave and I chatted, the gaggle of fans grew, so I stepped aside. I hovered within earshot as two guys nodded gravely and said, "You rock!" and "Awesome!," and a woman came over and lit a cigarette for him.

Dave turned to me and nodded to the bar across the lot. "Hey, you want to go grab a beer in there? There's a bar out by our hotel we can check out later."

After a while, with the rest of the band gone and the bar crowd thinned, Dave and I got a ride to a place on the North side. There were seats saved for him at the end of the bar, and the first drink was on the house. He was subdued now, taking pulls from his Miller Lite, and didn't seem to mind me asking about his writing routine, touring in Europe, or the band's broken-down van. We settled into a rhythm of speaking a sentence, nodding, and pausing for a drink. He told me about his girlfriend and I talked about Felix.

"So were you there in the room when he was born?" Dave asked. "Amazing, I bet."

"Yeah," I said. "You know, the thing I remember most about it is, when he came out, he just had these incredible eyes. They kept darting back and forth, taking it all in."

Nod. Pause. Drink.

On the other side of the bar, a barrel-chested Latino was loading bottles into the cooler. He stood and yawned, his face lit up by the television screen above that silently showed baseball highlights.

"Are you working on any new material these days?" I asked Dave.

"We're writing," he said. "The next album's going to be more stripped

down, more emotional."

He gestured toward the barback with his cigarette. "I wanna write for that guy," he said. "That guy is so much more rock 'n' roll than all the middle class white people sitting in this bar right now."

There was no negativity or bitterness in Dave's voice when he said this, only a hint of reverence for the man standing a few feet away. It struck me as an odd thing for him to say, yet consistent with my own fantasies of what Marah aspired to accomplish. It made me think of "Feather Boa," and how that song is so much more rock 'n' roll than anything I'd heard in a long, long time.

So I started telling Dave how I felt.



Some songs derive an unexpected power by pairing up lyrics of suffering and turmoil with music that is so upbeat that it shocks you into getting up and dancing. In these songs, the words are a dirge, but the tune is a celebration. There's no master list for this genre, but I imagine most music

CHRIS MROZEWSKI PHOTO

"At times the two brothers come together around the same mic and sang harmonies lip to lip."





"I started transcribing lyrics and working"

"Dave and Serge howled into the microphone."



lovers can recall a song that won them with a catchy melody then staggered them with a heavyweight punch after they took a closer look at the lyrics. Marah's "Feather Boa" has the same kind of formula. It begins:

*Standing on a corner alone with the wind
Cocaine in his system and it's colder than it's
ever been
You know sometimes all the cruelty of the
world just descends
Down upon a man in high heels
For no reason*

The song goes on to give us a glimpse of its subject's self-image: "This dick between my legs just makes me cry." Throughout, the imagery is clear and cold, but as for tone, there's room for interpretation. The first few times I listened, I wondered if Dave and Serge were just getting a voyeuristic kick, or worse, ridiculing this character's fractured identity. But as with so many Marah tracks, the melody sticks, and I put the song on repeat play until I figured out what it meant to me. The answer, for me, came at the end of the last verse:

*You know sometimes just a whisper from the
God of hope descends
And doubles-back to these types
For a reason*

I'm not a transsexual, an addict, or a sex worker, but I feel for this character. Somehow

I recognize the hurt that's rotting through his heart, and I want things to turn around for him. That last verse convinced me that Dave and Serge do, too.

On many of the live recordings from the tour, and again at the block party, the band had introduced "Feather Boa" with cracks at the keyboard player, Kirk Henderson. Sometimes Serge would joke that the song was dedicated to Kirk's boyfriend. Other times he'd dedicate it to Kirk, alleging with a smirk that he had taken to prancing around their hotel rooms in lingerie and lipstick. It got a laugh out of the crowd, but it bummed me out.



So there I sat at the bar with a rock 'n' roll hero, a guy who sang his brains out and took me along for a night-ride in his world, a man that everyone in the crowd at the block party must have wished he could be.

"Dave, one thing I was wondering, can I give you some criticism?" I asked, and he nodded. "I say this with all the respect in the world, really. But one thing about 'Feather Boa'... I wish you wouldn't do that intro to it, about Kirk's high heels and all that. To me—and this is just me—that's not what the song is about."

Dave looked down at his bottle. I didn't stop.

"When people come to a show for the first time, you can't really understand the words, you know. So when you introduce it like that, they may come away thinking it's about something completely different than what it's about."

"You're right," he said, looking across the bar. "We're not going to

do that intro anymore."

"No, I mean, that's just what I think," I said, cursing the Old Style and Cuervo that had possessed me.

"The reason we do that is to lighten things up a bit, you know," he said. "Out on the road, you need a little humor in the show sometimes. But seriously, we're not going to do it anymore."

Red Hat Society

Feather
Boa

Six Foot Length



out the chords on my acoustic guitar."

I guessed he just wanted me to get off the subject. I was starting to feel uncomfortable myself, telling the artist what his art meant.

"I don't know..." I put my hand on the sweat-soaked shoulder of the FUNK jacket. "I just love that song. It's a great song."



The next morning I made a pot of coffee and sat out on the back porch, overlooking the dumpsters in the alley. I decided to bring my electric guitar up from the basement. It had been down there under lock and key for months if not years, but with Felix and Veronica gone for the weekend, it was time to tune the strings, crank up the amp, and work on that "Point Breeze" lick.



In early October, thieves broke down the front door and robbed our apartment. They left behind the computer, the TV, and plenty of other valuables, but they did take my electric guitar. I never quite managed to decipher "Point Breeze" and make it my own.

Felix experienced the first serious illness of his life around this time—days of high fevers that finally gave way to a full-body rash and the diagnosis of a benign viral infection. I learned that the quickest way to forget about your stolen guitar is to hold your baby as he screams at the fire pulsing through his veins.

There's so much in life that reminds you how foolish it is to dream. The facts have always been there, you just forget sometimes.



"I put my hand on the shoulder of the FUNK jacket. 'I just love that song. It's a great song.'"

Listening to Mariah has gotten me into this habit of dreaming, though. And yes, I feel like a fool sometimes. It's irrational for me to imagine myself as a character in a story, and to decide that the drama will be worth it if I can just gut it out here in this city. It's pointless to ponder what I'd feel if Feather Boa sat down next to me on the train. It's silly for me to chronicle my petty anxieties in a letter and send it to my rock 'n' roll heroes. These are all things that I'd do well to keep to myself. I'm an adult with a job, a kid, and bills to pay.

But some days I think the dreams keep me going, and keep me knowing who I really am. I'm not just the job I do. I'm not just the dad. I'm not just the one with the checkbook.

I'm the guy standing in the front row with a big grin, the one who struck up a friendship—if only for a night—with the dude up there in the FUNK jacket who's singing anthems for you and me and the transvestite junkie hookers.

And that is so much more rock 'n' roll than anything else I am. 🐾

**ROBERT SANTELLI DOCUMENTS THE RISE OF HIS HOMETOWN HEROES
IN GREETINGS FROM E STREET. INTERVIEW BY CHARLES R. CROSS**

Since joining the staff of this magazine in the '80s (as the original "Greetings From Asbury Park" columnist and Associate Editor), Robert Santelli has traveled westward from the Jersey Shore to make his mark on the most prominent music museums in the country. After two six-year stints—as the first education director for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, then CEO of Seattle's Experience Music Project—Santelli is now guiding the new the Los Angeles-based Grammy Museum into being as executive director. He has authored numerous books along the way, including *American Roots Music* and *The Big Book of Blues*. But home is where the heart is, and before he was bad and nationwide, Bob was a young Jersey Shore guitar player and music journal-

ist, reviewing concerts for the *Asbury Park Press*, present and accounted for as the local scene birthed and exploded.

His roots still show. In 1998, Bob worked with Bruce Springsteen behind the scenes, assisting him as he shaped his reminiscences for the Songs book. In the new *Greetings From E Street* (Chronicle), Santelli revisits the New Jersey of his youth to tell the story of Springsteen's E Street Band for a virtual museum of a history book. Upon the publication of *Greetings*, as well as the seventh edition of his *Guide to the Jersey Shore: From Sandy Hook to Cape May* (Globe Pequot), I asked Bob and this magazine's founder, Charley Cross—two old *Backstreets* editors sitting around talking—to revisit the glory days. —CP



**"IT WASN'T SAN FRANCISCO OR LONDON, BUT IT WAS NEW JERSEY,
AND IT WAS OURS. I TOOK A LOT OF PRIDE IN THAT."**



Backstreets: I've known you for around 30 years, but I've never known if you were born in New Jersey?

Santelli: I was born in 1952 in Jersey City, and I spent most of my early youth in Hudson City, right on the Jersey side across from New York.

In the mid-'60s things started getting bad, and my father felt compelled to get out. A lot of Italians were moving down the Jersey Shore to Bricktown, Belmar, and Asbury Park, which had always been a place where Italians had summered. We moved down there to Point Pleasant Beach, which was as nice a place as you could find.

When did you first become interested in music?

I was old enough to have seen Elvis Presley in 1956 on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. I was very young, but that so moved me that at family gatherings they would say, "Bobby get up and do your Elvis," and I'd sing "Hound Dog" and play air guitar.

I grew up totally immersed in music from 1963. I was one of these kids who had a paper route, and I spent all my money buying 45s. When the Beatles hit in early 1964, I wanted to be a musician. I started taking guitar lessons and envisioned myself as a musician. Because West New York was literal-

ly right across the river, on Saturdays I would take the bus to Greenwich Village in 1965 when all the clubs, like Gerde's Folk City and the Café Wha, were happening. I was too young to go in at night but I'd spend the whole day there, and in Washington Square Park, just soaking up what was happening.

By 1965, I moved away from the Beatles to Bob Dylan because that folk stuff was happening in the Village. You couldn't help but be blown away by it. I was fantasizing myself as a young Bob Dylan. I had Bob Dylan boots and

Shore back then was not like it was today; it was a long, long way away. I would go back to the city every week, as I didn't like living on the Shore. I joined a duo and we were playing folk music.

Do you remember what your group was called?

It was called Carbonated Ocean [laughs]. But soon I switched back to electric guitar and rock 'n' roll.

By 1969, I was a senior in high school, and I was in a band called Train. I helped pay my way through college with that band. We were in a

boardwalks. A lot of people who were summering in the Jersey Shore were from New York City.

Go 30 miles south to a place like Stone Harbor, and it was Philadelphia-influenced. It was black-influenced too, but the two scenes didn't cross too much. The Hawks, the early incarnation of The Band, were playing down there. It was a long way to get to Atlantic City back then.

What was different about the two sounds?

The common denominator, both with Philly and the North Jersey area was a strong doo-wop influence. Vocals were very important. In the early 1960s there were a lot of teen idols coming out of Philly; you had Fabian and Bobby Rydell. What we got up in North Jersey was more influenced by the Four Seasons and had a more rock edge. I always felt that the British Invasion had a greater influence in North Jersey. Bruce was a huge Animals and Rolling Stones fan. It would be hard to overemphasize the influence of the British Invasion on the Shore.

A lot of great bands came through that area; was there one concert in particular that you remember affecting everyone?

In 1966, the Stones played at the Asbury Park Convention Center. In 1967, there were the Doors, [Jefferson] Airplane, the Who. Everybody who played New York and Philly stopped there. As a stringer for the *Asbury Park Press*, I had front row seats to every show. I watched every single band come through. They don't do that anymore. I had backstage access, but I had to file that night. I'd go sit at a typewriter and hammer out a 12-inch review for the next day's edition.

When did Bruce Springsteen first come on your radar?

In 1968, I was in Red Bank, and there were coffee houses there.

**IT BLOWS MY MIND THAT
STEEL MILL WASN'T SIGNED TO
A MAJOR RECORDING CONTRACT.
AT OCEAN COUNTY COLLEGE,
THEY CLEARLY, CLEARLY
BLEW OUT 2,000 KIDS.**

copied the way he dressed from his album covers. I went over to the Village to search Dylan out—I heard where he lived, and that he'd played in the Village. He was clearly the most important figure in that time for me, which was why doing the Dylan exhibit at EMP was so important for me personally.

I didn't know about Springsteen then. If Springsteen was playing at the Café Wha, I didn't hear about it. That was later in 1966, when I started high school at Point Pleasant Beach. The Jersey

way a precursor to Southside Johnny and the Jukes, with female singers, a full horn section, two drummers, a lead singer, and we did a lot of soul music. We listened to a lot of Stax music.

How did the scene vary up and down the Shore?

The Shore is a large area; it goes from Sandy Hook down to Cape May. The area I'm talking about would be known as the North Jersey Shore, and that would be primarily black, Irish, Jewish—the area from about Long Branch down to Bay Head. In those 20 miles there would be lots of clubs, because there were a number of

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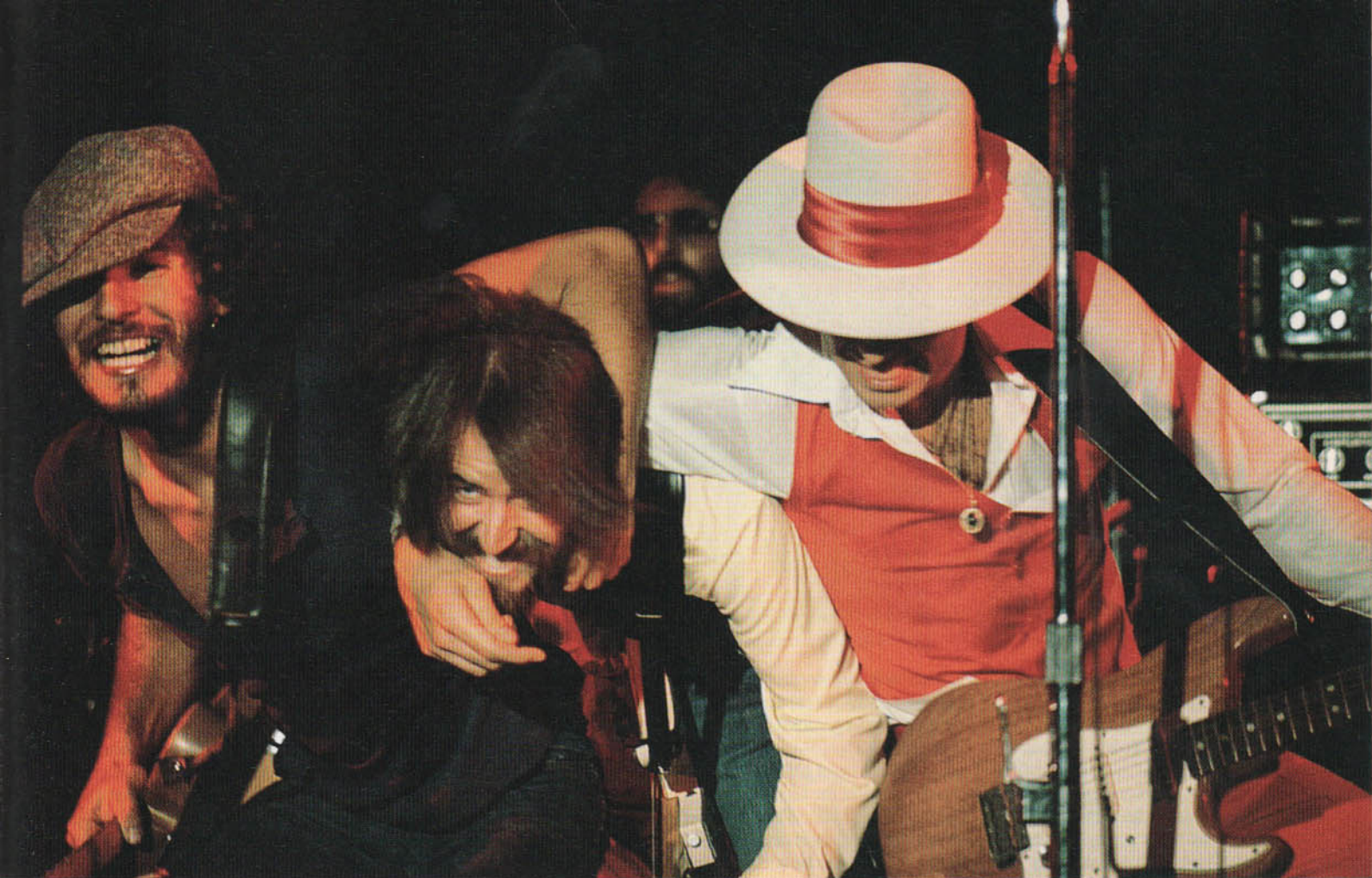
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And that was the first place I ever heard Bruce Springsteen play. He was playing acoustic. He was playing Tim Buckley covers, and Buckley was hard to play. I couldn't believe how good he was. Three or four months later, I started to hear about [early Springsteen bands] Earth, and Child, and I started to see both of those. And then I started to go to the Upstage. I was never good enough as a musician to get onstage at the Upstage, but I went to listen. And that's where I saw a lot of great jams with guys who would be in the E Street Band. There were a lot of "Battles of the Bands" at VFWs and CYOs.

I saw the Bruce Springsteen Band in 1970, and that just floored me. I saw Steel Mill; I saw every band other than the Castiles. I had an interest in black music, and I'd go to the Student Prince and hear the Bruce Springsteen Band. It was so much what I wanted to do with my band.

I was involved in music as a musician through col-

lege, and I had aspirations of being a musician, like so many kids, but I suffered a hand injury playing basketball, and it took me away from the guitar for two or three years.

At the same time, when I got hurt, I was becoming more interested in journalism. I was the entertainment editor at the student newspaper at Monmouth College, and I did a lot of the record reviews. As a stringer for the *Asbury Park Press*, I got paid to go to all the concerts. I left my idea of being a rock star behind. I wanted to work for *Rolling Stone*.

I had a similar experience a few years later on the West Coast. Were there any particular journalists who were your icons?

I was reading John Rockwell in the *New York Times*, and then when Dave Marsh came out with [Born to Run:] *The Bruce Springsteen Story*, that was it—he became my mentor. I had been writing about the scene and cov-

ering it from the grass roots, writing about Jon Bon Jovi when he was in the Atlantic City Expressway, which was a Jukes cover band. I had been writing about Bruce and really starting to take an interest in the scene, and I came to realize that I was witnessing something very special. I was writing about everyone and absorbing as much as I could, figuring this was history. I saw it happen, and I documented it. It wasn't San Francisco or London, but it was New Jersey, and it was ours, and I took a lot of pride in that.

Going back to the Upstage: That period is perhaps overromanticized because it was such a period of struggle, wasn't it?

It really was. But when you are 20, the struggle doesn't impact you and you can go hungry. I remember going surfing early in the morning and

seeing musicians sleeping on the beach because that's what they did. There was a lot of idealism. It was only later that I realized that it meant that a lot of people weren't going to college and a lot of guys weren't starting careers. You realized they had invested their entire youth and their dreams into the hope of making it as musicians, and they didn't. Only a few did. To this day, there are players down there still playing, holding on to a thread of that dream. They do that because that's all they know—but they starve today.

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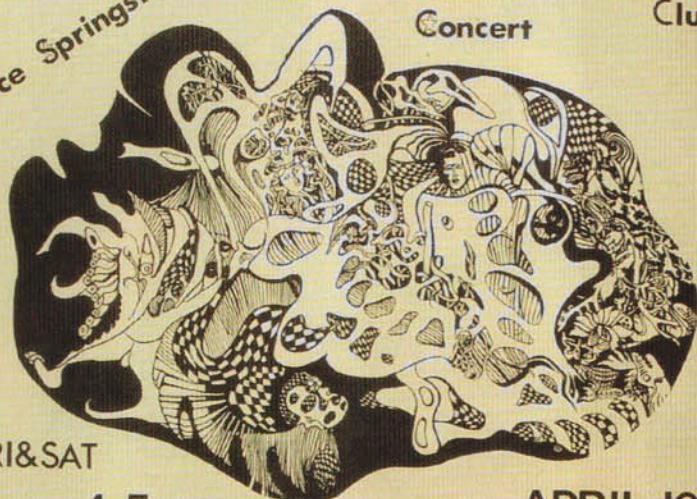
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At what point did you first interview Bruce?

In 1974, the Stone Pony had just opened, Tom Whalley [later president of Interscope Records] and myself, we were living together. We were both teachers, because I wasn't making a living as a writer. I met Bruce at the Stone Pony one night—that was the first time I met him on a professional manner. He knew I was a journalist. I introduced myself to him, but I walked away feeling like he interviewed me rather than the other way around. I sensed that he was genuine and real. By this time I was interviewing bands all the time, but Springsteen was the first one who made me feel special, like I was important. And I thought that was amazing.

It is worth noting that back in 1974 Springsteen wasn't often being written about, and they needed all the press they could get.

They were absolutely desperate for it. You would have thought the first record would have been blown out of the water by the local press, but it was not. The Asbury Park Press were not fans of the band, and they did not cover it. Years later I asked why not, but no one had a clue. Bruce was very upset about that.

Your writing over the years has been about many bands on the Shore, and not just Springsteen.

I felt a responsibility. Everyone knew about Bruce by 1975, with *Time* and *Newsweek*. I felt a responsibility to tell about the rest of the music. There was a tremendous burst of talent. The whole world knew about Bruce, but no one knew about this soul-drenched rock 'n' roll, and the shadow of Bruce was so large that many of these people had a hard time finding their way through that darkness. I tried to let the rest of the world know—but I didn't do such a good job, because a lot didn't get the attention they deserved. The record companies saw many of these groups as Bruce-wannabes; they didn't see this as an area where many people, Bruce being just one of them, were influenced by black music.

With all the national attention on Bruce, for the other bands it almost became "the curse of Bruce Springsteen."

It did.

The one band that everyone thought would equal Bruce was Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes.

That band was so beloved by everyone. From 1974 to 1976, when Steve Van Zandt

was involved in that band, they had as much influence on me. I had never heard of reggae, but Steve fell in love with Jimmy Cliff and *The Harder They Come*, and he made everyone check it out. A month later we all headed to Cambridge, MA, to the Orson Welles Theater to see *The Harder They Come*. It was the only place in the nation that was playing it then.

The Jukes would pull out obscure soul music. They had great record collections. Steve made the band extremely likeable. You couldn't get into the Pony on the nights they were there. It was a dance; it wasn't a concert. That band, during that three-year period, was amazing. The Memorial Day concert, with Bruce sitting in, was a highlight. We thought they would be as big as Bruce, because in our minds they were as good. They were the Asbury Jukes, just like Bruce was the *E Street Band*. These were real places for us. They represented us, they were from us, and they weren't afraid to admit it. We just thought there was no

question about it, and there was a whole line of other people who should have followed them. Looking back, the only person who does is Jon Bon Jovi.

On the Shore, isn't it true that Bruce only really broke with the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek*? That's October of 1975.

Bruce had more success with Steel Mill than he did with the Bruce Springsteen Band, or the band that he had in 1973, which wasn't yet the *E Street Band*. Steel Mill would play to a couple of thousand people. I remember going to Ocean County College and seeing Steel Mill in 1969, and they were unbelievable. That band was embraced big time because they incorporated elements of the Allman Brothers, and Cream, and Hendrix. It was guitar-driven. If you were seriously interested in music and saw that band, you began to recognize that there is something special going on with Bruce Springsteen. He's playing his guitar very low. He's playing without his shirt on. He's very sexy; he's accenting all the things that make people go, "there is something exciting here." He carried himself differently.

That would begin to fade in the Bruce Springsteen Band, and then when he starts to go up to New York City, it fades almost entirely. It blows my mind that Steel Mill wasn't signed to a major recording



Vincent Lopez

Danny Federici

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Gary Tallent

Clarence Clemons

contract. At Ocean County College, they clearly, clearly blew out 2,000 kids.

They were embraced because they were our people. We knew these people. That was very different for New Jersey. It was like the Four Seasons: If you were any good, you went to New York City. Bruce didn't do that. He did it for a spell, of course, but he came back and demanded that he be known as a New Jersey artist. He told me that story, how the Columbia people said, "We've got to get you this New York thing," and he said no way. I thought that took great courage—and, of course, people at the Shore couldn't believe it. We had always been the butt of so many jokes. In 1969, every kid in my graduating class was trying to get to somewhere else. They all wanted to leave.

When *Greetings* came out it wasn't so much the music as it was the title. He was saying he was from here.

Even the title itself is a little nervy, a bit sarcastic. Like titling a record *Greetings from Beautiful Downtown Newark*.

Especially back then. People weren't writing postcards from Asbury Park then. It was a hellhole. Bruce loved the postcard, but he would often walk that boardwalk. He would often go surf-

ing there or in Long Branch. But they all could have moved to New York. Even working with him on *Songs*, I've never gotten a firm explanation on why he stayed in Jersey. He would explain it, but to me it was so risky to do that I feel there is a deeper story there that I would love to find out. Everything is on the line—you work for this moment but to be 60 miles from New York City, which back then could have been 500 miles.

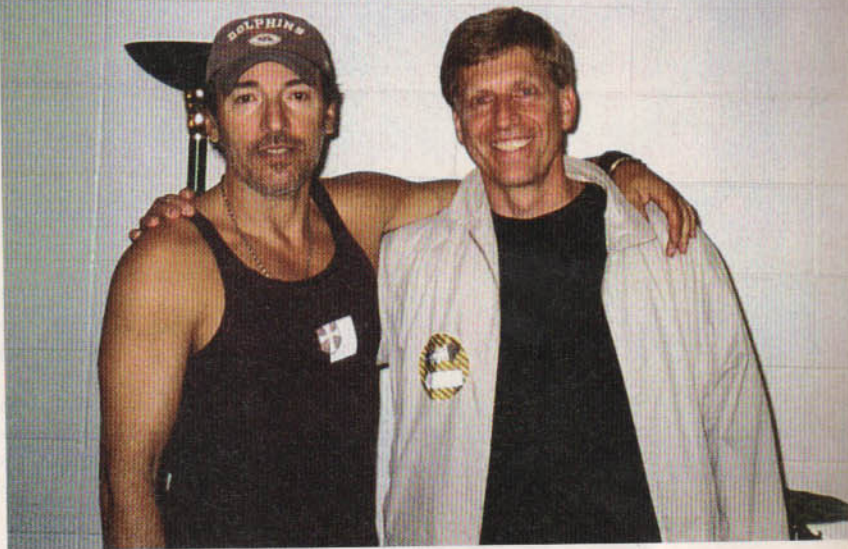
You write in the Greetings book about him taking the bus into the city, and the level of commitment that took.

A lot of the images that would find their way into Bruce Springsteen's songs you could see from the seat of a bus on the way into New York.

One of the most intriguing parts of Springsteen's history is that, even during those years of poverty, he stuck to his dream when others moved on. He, essentially, did what he said he was going to do—make a life in rock 'n' roll.

I've always admired what I thought to be his clarity of vision. He always showed to me that the vision was clear.

Backstage at the Tacoma Dome: Santelli with Springsteen on the *Rising* Tour, August 21, 2002.



And as he moved through life, he added layers to it and got rid of things that didn't work, but clearly he could see his way through the forest. In rock 'n' roll that's nearly an impossible task; so many people get sidetracked by the hoopla, or by believing their own hype. That could have happened big time during the *Time* and *Newsweek* era. Things happened there, too, with Mike Appel. But even during those periods, there was a clarity of vision.

If someone were to ask me my favorite period of Bruce Springsteen, it was 1975, 1976, when they couldn't record. I remember seeing them at the Palladium in New York, and in Red Bank at the Count Basie Theatre. They were almost ferocious in terms of their intensity. I would go to those shows and draw inspiration from them. My very first book—which I won't recommend to anyone—I dedicated the book to him for his "unknowing inspiration."

Your new book is a book on the E Street Band and not Bruce Springsteen. What motivated that focus?

This isn't a book about Springsteen; it's a book about Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. I've always had a hard time disassociating Bruce from the band. To me, they need to be together. I've always taken a lot of interest in the band members, and a lot of better writers than I were writing about Bruce Springsteen. I could have written about some of the personal stuff because I was privy to it, but I would never do that. I was interested in the music.

Even when I wrote for you early on in *Backstreets*, I loved the concept of what a band is. I always felt that Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, even though this has now turned into mythology, had a sense of community there. It wasn't what they created. There was a family element at the Upstage, and later on at the Stone Pony. Some of my favorite rock 'n' roll moments are being a part of that.

Being my age and still being involved in rock 'n' roll is a wonderful thing. I feel like their stories—even stuff like what Max did with Killer Joe, or what Steve did with the Disciples of Soul—are something that newer Springsteen fans need to go back and learn about. I was there, and it's my responsibility to at least get that out.

The most important voice of Asbury Park; New Jersey. And perhaps the as well.

THE SPRINGSTEEN'S DEBUT ALBUM COLUMBIA RECORDS AND TAPES



*Bruce Springsteen
Greetings from
Asbury Park, N.J.
KC 31903*



At Cleveland's Severance Hall in 1997, with Garry Tallent.

Let's run through a few of the band members and talk about them. How about Garry Tallent?

Garry Tallent has one of the best record collections I've ever seen. I did a story for *Goldmine* and got to spend a day with him spinning records when he still lived in Rumson on the Jersey Shore. He knows more about rockabilly than anyone and is as much a student of early rock as any academic or journalist.

I've always wondered if Garry's interest in rockabilly helped shape Bruce's songs around The River that seem to explore that genre more.

Garry is not the kind of guy to say, "Hey, you've got to hear this record." I saw more of that with Southside, and they often shared a record collection, and Johnny would get very excited about something.

I don't think Garry shaped that. Bruce was constantly going back to rock 'n' roll history, and delving into it: Woody Guthrie, Robert Johnson. And in the mid-'70s period I think Jon Landau deserves a lot of credit, because he was giving Bruce

books. Bruce had not been a real student in high school, and he didn't go to college, but later on he becomes very literate.

When I was doing *Songs* with Bruce, we'd work in his study in his house, and I was fascinated by his library, which is full of some of the greatest works in American literature and cultural history. Bruce was reading some of the same stuff I had to read for grad school. He became an amazing reader. And also, the amount of CDs and records that were around—early blues and folk stuff, and country—was surprising. But Bruce became this voracious reader. He seemed

ALSO NEW TO THE BOSS BOOKSHELF

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN ON TOUR: 1968-2005

By Dave Marsh

324 pp. Bloomsbury, hardcover

BORN TO RUN: THE UNSEEN PHOTOS

By Eric Meola, foreword by Daniel Wolff

86 pp. Insight Editions, hardcover



In addition to Santelli's *Greetings From E Street*, two recent coffee table books deserve top billing as living room centerpieces. ***Bruce Springsteen on Tour*** is a new narrative by

Springsteen's officially unofficial biographer, Dave Marsh, with an emphasis on the visual we haven't seen since the first pressing of his *Born to Run: The Bruce Springsteen Story* in 1979. *On Tour* is filled out beautifully with hundreds of photos taken by Danny Clinch, Neal Preston, Phil Ceccola, Annie Leibovitz and others, of Springsteen on stage, backstage, at soundchecks, and in rehearsal, with and without E Street Band members and friends.

As for the text itself, in contrast to his earlier books on Springsteen, in which he chronicled the life and times of the artist, this is Marsh's first-person account of seeing Springsteen perform live—hundreds of times over more than 35 years. Marsh admits to being apprehensive before seeing his first show on a new tour. He wonders, Will it work? Does Bruce have enough new to say and play? Will I like it? That's right, Dave Marsh gets pre-show jitters, too.

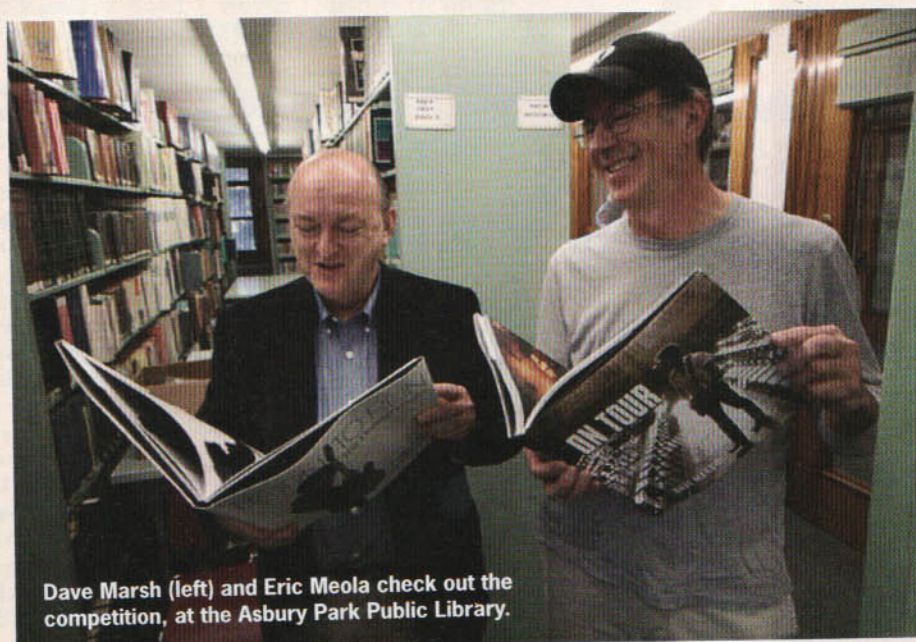
In the run-up to the *Devils & Dust* tour, he worried that the songs on the album, which he describes as "dry bones in a valley of interior monologue," would not translate well in front of a live audience: "What could he do with that listless new batch?" After seeing a few shows, Marsh marvels at the ways Springsteen crafted a terrific per-

formance by using new sounds and instruments, by injecting life into the new songs, and by explaining to the audience what the songs meant and why he wrote them, thus "weaving an autobiographical tapestry." What really made this tour remarkable, according to Marsh, was that Springsteen went "rampaging" through his body of work, noting he played 140 different songs in the first 72 shows of the tour.

Like many fans, Marsh has paid careful attention to which songs Springsteen played where, when, and in what context. He gives props to BruceBase (the online catalog of setlists that dates back to the late 1960s), which made it possible for him to more accurately report on and recall tour events and song premieres as they occurred. But it's his own informed perspective, and what he chooses to highlight from decades of performances, that

makes this book more than a tour chronology. In Chapter 4, Marsh traces the evolution of the spoken word diatribe Springsteen inserted into his performance of "Backstreets" during the "Lawsuit" tour. Later, he offers an interesting take on the reaction among hardcore fans (he includes himself) toward Springsteen's 1992-'93 band (he loved it, nobody else got it.). In Chapter 12, "Public Service Announcements," Marsh gives a detailed account of the Vote for Change tour. His take on that joyous stretch of music will be illuminating for those who did not see the shows and may bring tears to the eyes of those did.

On a personal note, Marsh opens up about the pain of losing Kristen Ann Carr, his and Barbara Carr's daughter. He describes the onstage and offstage lengths to which Springsteen (and others) went to support them and to fund research into



Dave Marsh (left) and Eric Meola check out the competition, at the Asbury Park Public Library.

to know all about this stuff and the cultural ramifications of it all. I'd love to go to his house just to see what he was reading. And then we'd take breaks, just to see his library. He'd have books by all these artists and regional painters, like Thomas Hart Benton. I found it all fascinating because it was stuff I had studied being a Ph.D. candidate in cultural studies.

You wrote a book with Max Weinberg. Tell me about your relationship with him.

Max and I established our relationship in 1981. He had read my stuff and was looking to do *The Big Beat*. He, too, is a student; he knows

a great deal about drummers and the British invasion. He knew about the Stones, the Kinks, and the Animals. The year and a half I spent with Max doing the book was so educational. After that, the only people I wanted to interview were the drummers—they were really nice guys and had the freshest stories, because they had never been interviewed. Max took me to Detroit and London and L.A., and we became good friends.

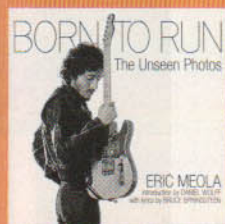
In England, we did hours and hours of interviews with Ringo Starr. We hit Ringo at a very



On the Point Pleasant Beach boardwalk with Max Weinberg (and an unidentified person from MTV) in the early '90s.

sarcoma, before and after she died.

A pithy, illustrated timeline runs the length of the book in the footer of each page. It begins with Springsteen's first paid gig in August 1965 at the Woodhaven Swim Club in Freehold and concludes with the closing night of the *Devils & Dust* tour in Trenton, New Jersey, on November 22, 2005.



In contrast to Marsh's 37-year travel diary, photographer Eric Meola's *Born to Run, The Unseen Photos* captures a single instant in that span of time. Crack this book open and it's as

if you've stumbled upon a box of old snapshots of friends you haven't seen for ages—could it be 30 years? You've never seen these 100-odd pictures before, but then they are not unfamiliar, either. After all, there's a picture of these scruffy dudes taken that same day tucked away in a peach crate with the rest of your vinyl record collection. And the baby pictures of that Fender Esquire, boy has it ever aged since then!

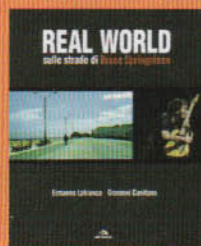
In his foreword, Daniel Wolff writes that Meola's outtakes of Springsteen and Clemons from the *Born to Run* album cover shoot offer a glimpse of Springsteen's "massive ambition" at that time and his sense of purpose in shaping his image. His facial expressions run the gamut: shy, sly, smiling, sedate, preoccupied, ponderous, and even impatient. Clarence stands in as Bruce's muse and his support system. According to Wolff, Springsteen brought Clemons, the only black member of the E Street Band by that time, to the photo shoot to reenact their stage chemistry and capture the world the band created on stage, which was "a promised land of justice, something like equality, and funky good times." In one two-page photo, taken outdoors, Clarence is squatting on his toes, talking animatedly to Bruce, who is sitting on the concrete looking drowsy but intrigued. It could be a still shot from the story of a meeting across the river.

In his own commentary, Meola writes that he chose the stark white background to isolate everything "in an undefined space. It doesn't matter where it is, and you don't think about that because all you're looking at is the foreground." The cover photo and the clever 12" x 12" book format mirror the actual *Born to Run* vinyl album cover, and the book's pages suggest an LP's lyric sheet insert.

A limited edition, signed copy of the book along with a photo signed by Meola, all in a collector's case, is available for \$195. Meola is donating all of his proceeds from the book to the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. Bravo, Eric.

REAL WORLD

Sulle Strade di Bruce Springsteen
By Ermanno Labianca and Giovanni Canitano
303 pp. Arcana (Italy), softcover



takes readers *al di là del palacio* (or should I say, beyond the colosseum) for an in-depth look at Springsteen in concert, in print, in music, and in contemporary society. Printed on high-quality coated paper with a matte finish, *Real World* is a treasure trove of rare photos (most of which were taken by Canitano), testimonials, and quips from fans and critics, as well as stories told by Springsteen from the stage dating back to the *Darkness* tour. The book's best contribution is Chapter 4, an artful photo essay of *una settimana tra i loughs del culto di Saint Boss*—a week's visit to the holy land for Springsteen fans. Non-Italian-speaking readers may want this volume for its photos alone. *Lavoro buono!*

TOUGHER THAN THE REST

100 Best Bruce Springsteen Songs
By June Skinner Sawyers, foreword by Christopher Phillips
286 pp. Omnibus Press, softcover

"Best of" lists are created to get a reaction; Sawyers' fellow discerning fans will surely get bent out of shape over what isn't (or is) on her list. But having opted to present the songs in order of their official release rather than rank them numerically—and with Phillips' foreword as a preemptive strike—she may well avert a public flogging. Readers will enjoy Sawyers' well-researched commentary, which is peppered with passages from the Bible, critics' comments, informative sidebars and atmospheric photographs. Though some song descriptions rely too much on a simple paraphrasing of lyrics, the overall combination of scholarship and lively prose (Sawyers describes "Blinded by the Light" as "a loosey-goosey concoction of utter abandon") makes this a fine addition to any Springsteen book collection.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN: MUSIC IN REVIEW

The Ultimate Critical Guide
By Mick Hall
74 pp. plus DVD. Edgehill, hardcover

This curious little product isn't sure who its audience is. An eight-chapter, 74-page hardcover booklet printed in 8-point type attempts to retell the whole story of Springsteen's music, while throwing in snippets of tabloid fodder along the way. Mounted in the back cover is a DVD containing previously unreleased footage (reproduced without permission, it would seem) from late night TV and award show appearances, with talking-over-the-music commentary from *MOJO* magazine editor Phil Sutcliffe and two others. The footage of Springsteen's performance of "Angel Eyes" at Frank Sinatra's 80th birthday is the highlight. But it's hard to find anything "ultimate" about this quickie package. ➔

—Marya Morris

Coming soon: The Backstreets Interview with photographer Eric Meola



interesting time; it was only a couple of years after John Lennon's death. We interviewed him at Tittenhurst, which had been John Lennon's house. One of my greatest rock 'n' roll moments occurred with Ringo during that book. We were there in the summer of 1982; my daughter had just been born a few months earlier, and I missed her, and I was really homesick. Ringo recognized that, and early one morning he said, "Come on," and he took me down on the estate to a small lake with an island with a house on it, where John and Yoko used to play chess. Ringo got me on the boat and rowed me around and talked about fatherhood. I couldn't believe it—there I was sitting in this boat and Ringo Starr was rowing me and talking about fatherhood. It was my most special rock 'n' roll moment.

Let's talk about Danny Federici, who had a lot to do

with the Greetings book.

The book really began as and was going to be a memoir of Danny's, but it took a different turn. Danny decided to pull back and just let this book become an E Street Band story, rather than his memoir. At one point, Danny may decide to put out his memoir. It is a fascinating story; I've used some of it with his permission. One of the things you realize is that Danny was very involved early on. He was working with Vini Lopez. I go into a lot of detail on the early days because I know it and because much of that was in Danny's book.

We were talking before about Steve. Is there an E Street Band without Steve Van Zandt?

If you put Bruce Springsteen aside and you look at the

Jersey Shore music scene, if there is one individual that deserves the most credit it would be Steve. Steve gave things to Bruce at a critical time that Bruce needed to make *Born to Run*. He certainly was the brains behind Southside Johnny. He was a doer; he was always making things happen and introducing new records. He's still this way today, if anyone reads

his column in *Billboard*. He's the perfect embodiment of a rock 'n' roll guy. I heard him play early on in the Blackberry Boogie band. On Sunday afternoons we'd get together and play touch football at Point Pleasant Beach, and Steve always had to be the quarterback. He did that until he hurt his hand and realized he couldn't make a living.



STEVE VAN ZANDT

(201) 922-9610

Steve's idea of sound—his understanding of the nuances of sound, of what ought to work, and his ability to articulate it—is uncanny. I always wondered why he wasn't a great producer. I've met a lot of producers, but none with his passion. Steve is so passionate about music he would only pick clients he loved, and they wouldn't sell a lot of records. But in a lot of ways, I think he's missed his calling—he could have been one of the greatest producers.

In a bizarre twist of fate, he ends up as best known for his acting. What do you think of The Sopranos?

Steve was always a whole lot more Italian than his last name indicated. I'm not surprised he is there; he fits it to a "T." Living out here in Seattle, and before in Cleveland, people always bring up *The Sopranos* to me. I don't watch it. I think it is brilliantly done, but because my father was in charge of the organized crime task force, in my family it is too close to home. I've seen

maybe five episodes, strictly to see Steve. Those actors are cultural heroes in New Jersey, and they are all great actors. But my father was undercover for six or seven years. Being Italian American, and seeing that there are a lot of other contributions we made other than the Mafia, it is hard to want to be remembered for that.

BRUCE KNEW I WAS A JOURNALIST. I INTRODUCED MYSELF TO HIM, BUT I WALKED AWAY FEELING LIKE HE HAD INTERVIEWED ME RATHER THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

Why did you write this book? Can you sum up what it means to you at this point in your career?

It is a book that, at this stage in my life and career, is a perfect representation of where I am. I see it as a museum book, as it is filled with replicas of artifacts. And here I am, for the last 15 years

of my life, working in music museums. I've really come to appreciate how artifacts in general can help tell stories. It doesn't have to be just words. I like this book, and *The Bob Dylan Scrapbook*, because they do that. They really are an extension of what I've been doing for the past 15 years. It is not a definitive book by any means,

you just can't go out and write. There has to be a bigger reason for it."

When I got out of grad school, I remember sitting down with them, and they thought I was going to stay in California. Tom Whalley had moved out there, and we thought we were going to make a go of it in the music industry. I think they

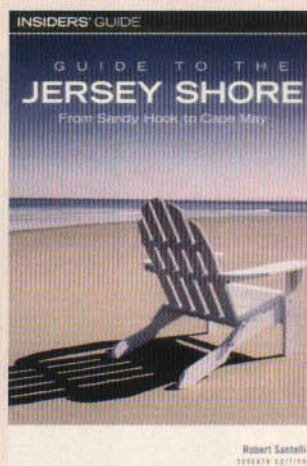
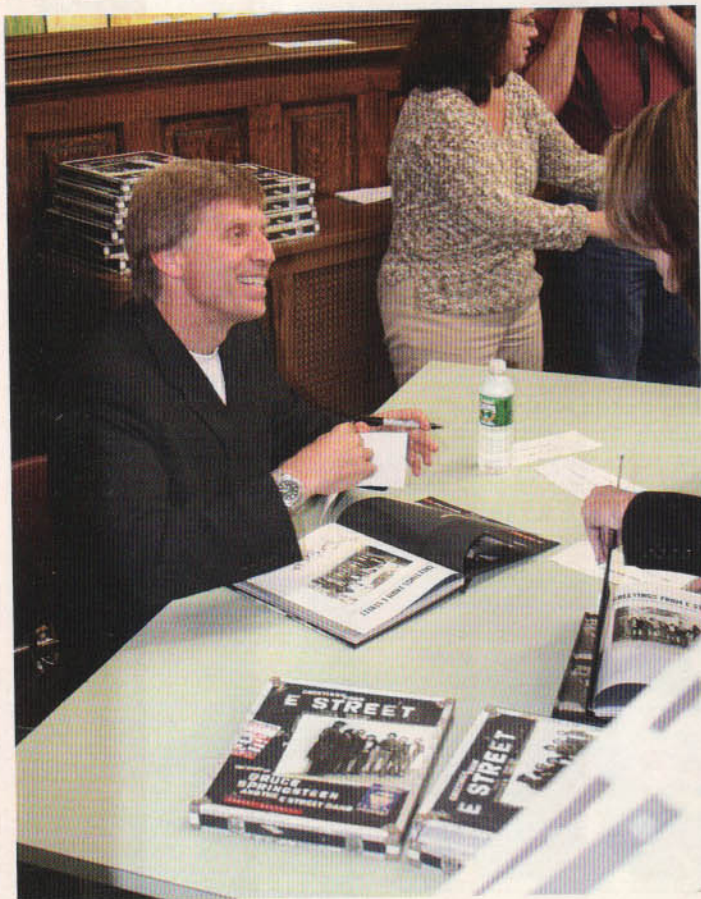
but it's not meant to be. If there were a traveling Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band exhibit, this would be the traveling bible for it.

I have an emotional connection to this story. In some ways I go back to this possibility, a long time ago, when I told my mother and father I wanted to be in music journalism. They weren't real happy about that.

What kind of career did they want you to consider?

My father wanted me to be a state trooper, which was what my brother did. My mother wanted me to be a teacher, and I did become that. But I remember them saying, "If you're going to do this, you have to assume a responsibility for something;

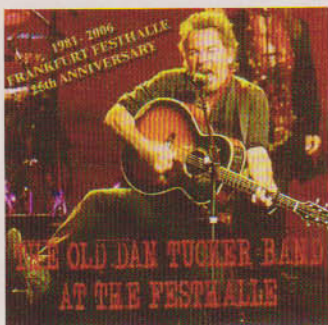
really wanted me to stay in California because it was the land of opportunity. They always wanted us to leave [New Jersey] and go to a better place. This book carries some of that responsibility. It is trying to tell a story in a different way. It tells a story, not just of this great band, but of the area that produced this band, the Jersey Shore. I put *Greetings From E Street* out, and there's also a new edition out of my Jersey Shore guidebook, so I call it my one-two punch. The guidebook is in its seventh edition since it originally came out in 1985. People still identify me as being from New Jersey, even though Seattle is now my home. My roots are still in New Jersey, and they probably always will be. 🐾



Above: Santelli's "one-two punch." **Left:** Signing copies of *Greetings From E Street* at the Asbury Park Public Library.

ON COLLECT ING

By Fred Mills



The Old Dan Tucker Band at the Festhalle

(Anubis 2CDR)
VENUE: Festhalle
CITY: Frankfurt, Germany
DATE: May 17, 2006
SOUND QUALITY: 9.5
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 9

Italy's Anubis label may specialize in cleaned-up archival Springsteen releases, but when it lands a hot contemporary tape, it's quick to take action. And in the case of this Seeger Sessions show, Anubis landed a sizzler. *Backstreets* is told that the label's resident taper made the trek to Germany twice: once to secure tickets for the Frankfurt show, and then again for the actual concert. Such diligence paid off, as *The Old Dan Tucker Band at the Festhalle* is easily one of the best-sounding titles we've heard from the tour. Bruce's vocals are crisp and up-front, but they don't overpower the instruments, all of which can be heard clearly. The horns in particular shine; along with the piano and organ, they bring to mind The Band's classic live album *Rock of Ages*. And given the generally upbeat, raucous nature of much of the material, it comes as a pleasant surprise that the audience noise here is minimal in terms of interfering with the listening experience. The Anubis taper clearly found one of those "sweet spots" that fans quest for.

Frankfurt didn't hold any huge surprises, with the setlist closely paralleling that of the previous night's show in Amsterdam. Longtime Springsteen friend Wolfgang Niedecken did come out at the end of the show for

the loopy closing number, "Buffalo Gals," though. And as good as the *Seeger Sessions* tunes are, there's something pretty special about hearing old Boss faves overhauled to fit the spirit and vibe: "Ramrod" now sounds like a Pogues tune, while "You Can Look" has been reinvented as a gospel call-and-response number.

Side Trivia Note: This concert took place almost exactly 25 years after Bruce undertook his first full European concert trek. It was on April 14, 1981, when the E Street Band took Frankfurt by storm on *The River* tour—a show documented by none other than Anubis last year as the two-disc *Shake!*



The John Henry Storm In Torino

(Anubis 2CDR)
VENUE: Palaolimpico Isozaki
CITY: Torino, Italy
DATE: October 2, 2006
SOUND QUALITY: 7
PERFORMANCE: 8
PACKAGING: 9

Anubis nabbed the second night of the Seeger Sessions tour's second European leg, part of a seven-night run across Italy. Most observers conceded that the show itself won't be remembered as one of Bruce's all-time greatest Italian shows, although you wouldn't know it from the bordering-on-insane level of rowdiness the audience displays. With that in mind, the recording is relatively noisy, and unlike Anubis' Frankfurt title reviewed above; the sound has a few flaws, coming across as somewhat distant with a distinct lack of bottom end (you'll need to work your equalizer or tone controls to get an even mix). It's still a worthwhile addition to the label's catalog.

Among the musical highlights: a boisterous "Old Dan Tucker," the amazing R&B overhaul of "Atlantic City," an Irish-flavored version of "The River," and an encore cover of the Band's "Rag Mama Rag" so woozysexycool

you'll be slapping yourself silly as you play it over and over again.

Worth noting—and this holds true for *Festhalle* as well—is the packaging. For its latest hand-numbered, limited-to-99-copies, pro-CDR release, Anubis created a glossy-stock, eight-page booklet and two-sided tray panel, each adorned with sharp photos from the actual concert, ticket and setlist reproductions, etc. The discs have embossed enamel title sides designed in the visual spirit of the *Seeger Sessions* CD—a small but nice touch that's clearly the work of true Boss fans.

Running Out of Innocence

(Godfather 2CD)
The Definitive Remastered Darkness Outtakes

(Godfather 2CD)
How Nebraska Was Born

(Godfather 2CD)
SOUND QUALITY: 8-10
PERFORMANCE: 9-10
PACKAGING: 10

Somehow, in our zeal to bring you coverage of the latest concert releases in each issue, we overlooked this trifecta of born-in-the-studio Boss. Let's be honest: for most die-hard fans, not even the release of *Tracks* several years ago was sufficient to quench our thirst for outtakes and unreleased songs—if anything, it just made us want more!

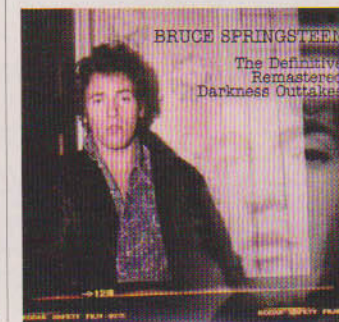
These three titles, released over the last couple of years, essay outtakes from *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *Nebraska* and, on a quasi-two-fer, *Born to Run* and *The Wild, the Innocent & the E Street Shuffle*. Given the wealth of studio material from those albums that has circulated over the years, no two-CD set could be described as "wholly comprehensive," and none of these contain anything that hasn't already been bootlegged. Over the years we've already seen multi-disc career overview collections such as E.St.'s *Deep Down in the Vaults*, Scorpio's *The Genuine*

Tracks, and Thrill Hill's *Missing Tracks*, along with album-specific titles like Archive Production's *Born to Run* outtakes collection *Born in the Studio*, Rough Cut's *Darkness*-centric *Loose Ends*, and several *Nebraska*-era installments of Labour of Love's 19-volume *The Lost Masters* series.

So what ultimately makes the Godfather sets appealing is the care and diligence with which they are presented on three key fronts: selection/sequencing, sound quality, and visual presentation.

Track-wise, all three make for solid start-to-finish listens. The *Darkness* set, for example, is a cornucopia of non-LP songs that sit proudly alongside alternate versions of familiar *Darkness* material. How *Nebraska Was Born* approaches its muse chronologically, starting with 11 songs recorded between March and May of '81, followed by 17 more from June-December, and concluding with a ten-song brace from the January 3, 1982 Colts Neck sessions; most are complete takes, and only a handful of tunes are presented in multiple takes. For *Running Out of Innocence*, on disc one and part of disc two are 15 tracks recorded at the Record Plant between March and July of 1973, plus three others from October '74 at 914 Sound Studios. Some are multiple takes (three each for "Thunder Road," "Jungleland," and "Backstreets"), others never made it to *Born to Run* ("Lovers in the Cold," "Lonely Night in the Park"), and some contain subtle—but fascinating—differences from the released versions (e.g., a doubletracked lead vocal on "Born to Run"). The remainder of disc two similarly tackles selected tracks from *Wild & Innocent*.

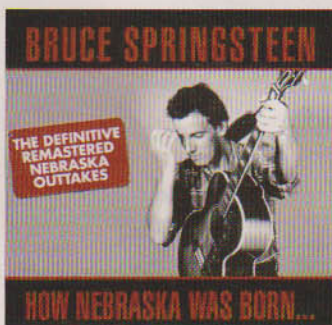
Sonically speaking, it's fair to call these, in bootleg parlance, "best-ever sound." In only a



few instances (primarily on certain *Darkness* recordings) is there sufficient hiss, muffling or other gremlins to be considered bothersome. Godfather bills the CDs as "remastered," which in this era of digital software is somewhat meaningless. (Can a piece of music be deemed "remastered" if the original multi-tracks or stereo masters weren't tapped as source material?) But until Bruce assembles expanded Legacy Editions of his Columbia albums (something that a lot of us got our hopes up about when word first got out about the 30th anniversary edition of *Born to Run*), this is as good as it gets.

In terms of packaging, the label has long specialized in gatefold and tri-fold cardboard sleeves that look like mini-LPs. Here, trifold wallets are decorated with period-appropriate photos and album sleeve photo session outtakes; cello-lined inner sleeves are included for each disc; and twin booklets contain reasonably annotated track information and additional art. *How Nebraska Was Born* is particularly striking, with the *Nebraska* red/black/white art motif maintained throughout, and there's even a mini reproduction of the original 1982 Columbia promotional poster. (Someone at CBS must have struggled with dreaming up inspiring ad copy. The poster reads: "*Nebraska* is an album of powerful, heartfelt stories of life in America today. *Nebraska* is just Bruce and his acoustic guitar and harmonica recorded at home in New Jersey. *Nebraska*, Bruce Springsteen, the time is right!")

Bottom line: if you think of the Godfather sets as representing "the best of the best" of the relevant outtakes, you won't go away disappointed. Once again, the Digital Don has come up with an offer you can't refuse. 🐉



While you'll have to wait until next issue for the full *Backstreets* rundown of the Seeger Sessions tour, for this column, there's no time like the present. While the 2005 *Devils & Dust* tour gave us a plethora of excellent and clear audience recordings, Springsteen's radically different stage show in 2006 changed the landscape in terms of sound quality. High-quality documents of the 2006 Seeger Sessions tour were fewer and further between—with approximately 17 more musicians onstage in 2006 than the previous year, that had to be expected. While we still have a few excellent recordings to choose from, it was a far cry from the embarrassment of riches we had two years ago.

In some ways, though, we did not need a lot of high-quality audience recordings from the 2006 Seeger Sessions tour—even aside from the upcoming *Live in Dublin* release, there was more broadcast material from 2006 than on any single tour since the five broadcasts of 1978. Let's start by going back to a show we discussed in this space last time, the BBC *Sold on Song* show from May 9, which gave us a concise, 60-minute show. This show was immediately available on the torrent sites and the binary newsgroup, thanks to a couple of industrious individuals, in both audio and video format.

In the U.S., Bruce joined forces with America Online to make one song from each of the 18 shows available for viewing on the internet the day after each show. While "18 Nights of Bruce" didn't give us a complete show, or even every song from a typical show, we got another two-plus hours of broadcast material. The only disappointment from the songs selected is that they were very light on Springsteen compositions, the most glaring omission being "Open All Night." The 18 songs were compiled on both CD and DVD and available on various torrent sites.

When the tour returned to Europe in the fall, the first hour of the October 5 show from Verona aired on the radio, and, luckily for us, this first hour included "Samson and Delilah" in its only tour performance. Also broadcast was "Atlantic City," which made up for its omission from the AOL series.

Add to those the three numbers done on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* and *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, including two which weren't even officially released at the time; three from the *Good Morning America* broadcasts, and three more songs webcast from the New Orleans Jazz Fest performance, and you've got yourself a pretty good selection of quasi-officially released material.

Of course, if all we talked about was broadcast material, this column would have been very short in most issues. So let's get to our red meat.

After a monumental and "instant classic" performance at Jazz Fest, the Seeger Sessions tour proper kicked off in Europe on the fifth of May, 2006. Three of the ten (four of eleven, if you count

the aforementioned BBC show in London) shows were released by Crystal Cat, and several others are available in excellent quality. A recording of the May 20 show from Oslo, courtesy of Bull, is probably the best non-Crystal Cat recording from this first leg. Two excellent recordings came out of the May 16 show in Amsterdam: one from a taper known as Popmarter, and another recorded from the VIP section with Sennheiser mics. The "VIP Sennheiser" might get the nod as being slightly better, but you can't go wrong with either one. Also recommended is a recording from Badalona, Spain (May 14) sourced by 6TG, which has excellent sound, but its low levels make it easily overlooked.

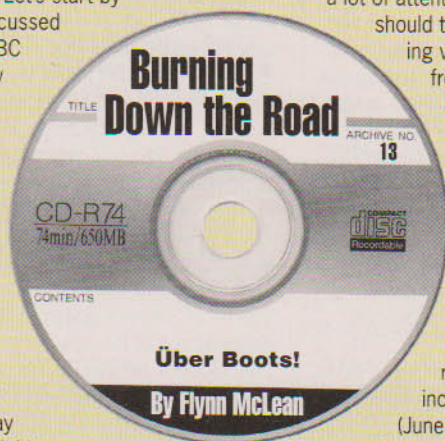
For the U.S. leg, the honor of best recording—and maybe even best non-Crystal Cat recording of the whole tour—goes to the June 6 show out of Concord, CA (or wherever the hell they were). The taper requested this one stay "old school," i.e., not be distributed via the internet, so it hasn't received a lot of attention, but this is one everyone should track down, for the best-sounding version of "Rag Mama Rag" from the tour alone (even if Bruce had to declare it a trainwreck before starting the song over).

Bakerstuff continued to boost his reputation by turning in excellent recordings from the Boston (May 27), Saratoga (June 19), and second Holmdel (June 25) shows. Other first-rate recordings from the U.S. leg included JB's from Des Moines (June 10) and St. Paul (June 11), a Schoeps-based recording from the June 20 Camden show, and Scoper's capture of the June 22 show at Madison Square Garden.

The fall leg in Europe, beginning October 1, was more rewarding in terms of both setlist changes and above-average recordings. Leading the way, at least in terms of consistency, is Essexboy and his recordings from both London shows (November 11 & 12) and Birmingham (November 9). However, Bull's recording of the October 29 show in Oslo may have been the best of the leg; in fact, Crystal Cat used two songs from that recording as bonus tracks on their *Stockholm Tonight 2006* release covering the October 30 show in Sweden.

The Italian portion of the fall leg featured two strong releases from Kokomo Records, which, despite its name, has had their releases uploaded just like any other fan-based recording. The October 5 show from Verona and the October 7 show from Perugia are strong, clear recordings deserving mention. The best recording of the Spanish tour was the October 19 show from Madrid, courtesy of 6TG (although, like his Badalona tape from the first leg, it also suffers from low levels).

For those for whom visual images are a plus, there are a few DVDs from the Seeger Sessions tour to choose from (assuming, naturally, that you'll also be picking up the official *Live in Dublin* set). Obviously, the aforementioned May 9 show that was broadcast on BBC is a must-have, even if it is only



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an abbreviated show. The don't-miss fan-based recording, though, is the FedeUD version of the May 12 show from Milan, Italy. Utilizing six cameras and Crystal Cat's superb audio, this DVD set easily rises to the top. FedeUD also did two shows from the fall leg, October 1 in Bologna (also featuring multiple cameras and dubbed audio) and October 4 in Udine, but neither approaches the May 12 show in overall quality.

For the U.S. leg, the pickings are slim in terms of video, although one could argue that you really don't need much more than the "18 Nights" from AOL. The best fan-based DVD is from a June 14 Wisconsin night, titled *Pay Me or Go to Milwaukee*. A single-camera production with some nice menus, this DVD also features remastered audio from the two existing audio recordings previously uploaded to torrent sites.

Post-Seeger Sessions tour, both of Bruce's December performances in Jersey were recorded and circulated by the aforementioned JB. In fact, his recording of the Bandiera benefit from December 12 may actually be one of the best recordings to ever come out of the Count Basie Theatre, a venue notorious for bad sound. A DVD of the show, called *Santa Comes to Red Bank*, also circulated, probably the first for a Springsteen performance from this venue. The December 2 Light of Day show is solid, but it falls short of previous Light of Day Bruce recordings.

The biggest story over the last eight months or so in the Bruce recordings world has been "The Über Series," an effort to locate and "release" previously uncirculated recordings, especially those of soundboard or other similar origins. In all collecting circles, whether it be baseball cards, antique cars, or rare coins, there is a hierarchy, with people at the top having the most rare or valuable items. In the Springsteen community, those with such items are called "über traders." The word *über* comes from the German language, where it originated as a combination of the Latin word for "super" and the Greek word for "hyper"; in today's vernacular, *über* simply means something is intensified. And in the Bruce community, über traders are those with the super-rare stuff.

The Über Series started out as a campaign by TattooDad, a "non-über" collector on the Stone Pony London website, to shake loose some of the closely guarded gems, held by a select few collectors, out into the general collecting community. Initial reactions and expectations were quite varied. Some thought it would drive the übers further away, some thought it would never work, while still others wouldn't think it would be a success unless it manifested a professionally shot DVD of the legendary '78 Winterland show.

As with any such campaign, things started slowly. The first items to make it out were wireless recordings of a "normal" show on the *Rising* tour (Vancouver, April 11, 2003) and wireless recordings of two *Rising* tour soundchecks (March 7 and August 30, 2003), and none of them sounded like anything special. However, an excellent wireless recording of the legendary May 8, 2000, show from Hartford (ya know,

"Roulette," "Honky Tonk Women" into "Darlington County"...) was next to surface. Once it was mixed with an audience recording—and two people did just that—it nearly sounded like a soundboard recording, and people started paying attention. The Hartford release was followed by the first wireless recording from the Garden 2000 stand to surface (June 20), which Prodigal Son quickly remastered into one of the best recordings from the reunion tour.

It was the next three installments of the series that really made everyone pay attention. Just before Christmas, appropriately enough, fully mixed soundboards from three holiday shows in Asbury Park were uploaded to torrent sites, and these quickly became the best present many Springsteen fans got in 2006. One night from each of the three years of shows at Convention Hall was represented: December 17, 2000; December 6, 2001; and December 8, 2003. These soundboards were originally planned to air as part of Sirius Satellite Radio's "Live Thunder" in late 2005, but, as mentioned here previously, only two of the three made it to the airwaves (the 2000 show got lost in the shuffle); even when they were aired, the broadcast signal was compressed, leaving a bit to be desired in the overall quality. But the ones that surfaced in late 2006 seemed to be fresh off of Toby Scott's CD burner, with the most amazing sound quality of some of the best Springsteen performances of the last decade or so. The horns on "Lucky Town" hadn't sounded that alive since that night on the boardwalk. Bruce's guitar on "Kitty's Back" just explodes out of the speakers. And the joy of Sam Moore's set from 2003 is just undeniable. Any one of these three sets alone would have been the highlight of the year; all three were a definite coup.

Things continued to pick up speed when the TattooDad posted late in 2006 that a pro-shot DVD of the June 29, 1985, show from Paris, France, would be coming soon, as he had it in hand. Previews of the DVD, as posted to YouTube and ABMS, promised that this DVD could be the single best non-officially released Springsteen DVD ever.

Breathless in Paris does not disappoint. A complete, pro-shot film from the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour, including "Shut Out the Light" no less, is reason enough to pump your fist; even better, care was taken to make sure it was done right. Digi-TOx, one of the best-known DVD creators, apparently worked very hard and diligently to edit, dub, remaster... to get this three-DVD PAL set to sound and look as good as possible before it was made available in March of this year. After all, if we could wait 22 years, we could wait another few months.

Another pro-shot DVD to surface from the über campaign was the second set and encores of the April 11, 1993, show from Verona, Italy, titled *A Gentleman of Verona*. Sure, it's the "Other Band," but this set does capture the tour

at a point when the band was really playing well together, and the powerhouse trio of "Who'll Stop the Rain," "Souls of the Departed," and "Born in the U.S.A." (including the "Star Spangled Banner" intro) should be seen and heard by everyone.

The only downside of this release is that the original audio was recorded a little hot, resulting in occasional distortion, so the DVD authors had to spend time remastering the audio; some would say it's still lacking in places. Of particular note is the bonus track, "Born to be Wild," another pro-shot song from the June 1, 1993, show in Oslo, featuring Rick LaPointe, a.k.a. "Chainsaw," on lead vocals and guitar. Can't really say this song is essential or groundbreaking, but it is definitely unique and fun to watch.

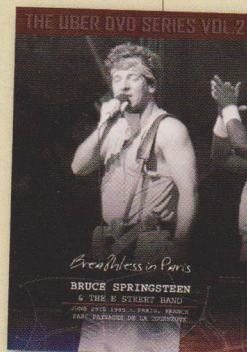
So after a series of über releases focusing on the last 15 years or so, there have finally been some recordings from the early part of Bruce's career. The first is a gorgeous (if slightly hissy at times) soundboard from the second half of the Joe's Place show in Boston, MA, from January 6, 1974. While four songs from this show had previously circulated in soundboard format, this is the most complete version available to date. The pre-*Born to Run* era is mostly characterized by jazzy jams on such songs as "New York City Serenade" and "Kitty's Back," but this show features some outstanding guitar work from Bruce.

Another early-'70s gem to surface in the series is a pre-air tape from the May 31, 1973 radio broadcast from WGOE radio in Richmond, VA. While the three in-studio radio shows from 1973 were certainly historic in nature, they haven't always received their due because of the poor sound quality: they were usually done on AM stations, and consumer equipment for taping off the radio wasn't as sophisticated as they are today. This tape, taken from a reel-to-reel recording made in the studio that day, shows what a treat those performances really were. One track sourced from this tape, "You Mean So Much to Me," had previously surfaced on the boot *Deep Down in the Vaults*, but this recording reveals another major highlight of this performance, a solo piano version of "New York City Song." The

sound quality is definitely top-notch, and some have said it sounds like Bruce is right there in your living room.

We go way back into the vaults for the next installment of the über series, back to a rehearsal session at Tinker West's Challenger Eastern Surfboards factory from March 14, 1972, when the band was still called The Bruce Springsteen Band. This is another recording sourced directly from a soundboard reel that was rolling that day, and the quality is absolutely stunning, with incredible usage of stereo separation. The heavy guitars and the vocals from a young Bruce are the highlights of this set. One of the tracks, "Don't You Want to be an Outlaw" (a.k.a. "Jesse James" and "Billy"), appeared on the "Deep Down in the Vaults" release; other notable songs are a cover of Dylan's "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" and Bruce's own "When You Dance."

And the über campaign rolls on....



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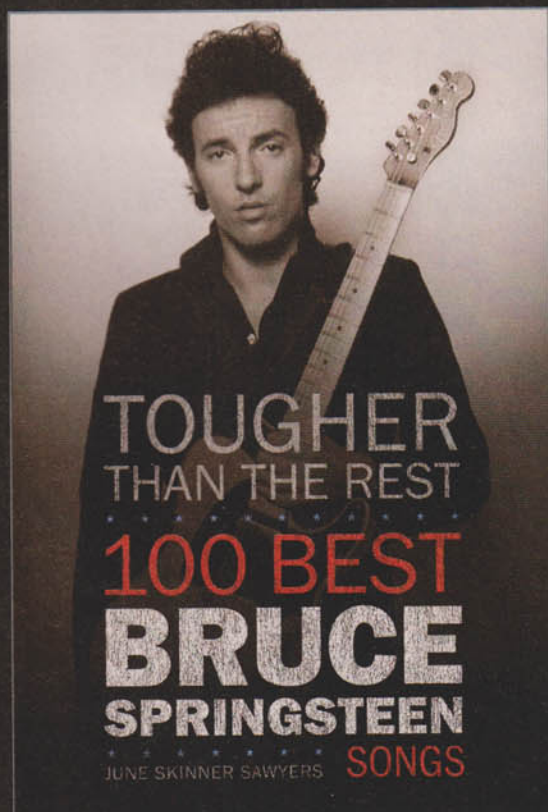
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Continued from page 5

controversy, and I'm quite sure Bruce's muse would be stomping her foot about now. That line is the one whereby, today, we might deliver a bit on the American dream. With it missing... well, you have my point. Let's have a correction forthcoming and a new pressing of the liner notes as soon as possible.

Remember the Asian-American woman who stood up during the *VH-1 Storytellers* Q&A to ask Bruce how he managed so well to identify with those marginalized in our society? I wonder how she feels tonight.

Mark Taylor
Princeton, NJ

PANCHO & LEFTY

Dear Editor:

I was listening to the bootleg called *This Land Is Your Land* (East Rutherford, July 3, 1981) when I heard something that made me laugh a lot. During the title track, at 55 seconds into the song you can hear two guys talking:

Guy #1: "I don't know this song."

Guy #2: "It's 'This Land Is Your Land'... you know... it was written by Pete Seeger."

Wrong, sure. But a vision of the future!

Francesco Magni
Lugano, Switzerland

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